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FAME ^{AND} FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF
BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

MATT THE MECHANIC

OR THE BOY WHO MADE HIS PILE

AND OTHER STORIES

By A Self-Made Man



Matt steered his boat for the middle of the stream. There the current had caught the frail craft holding the helpless girl and was dragging it swiftly toward the edge of the fall. She screamed, and the boys answered encouragingly.



Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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MATT, THE MECHANIC

—OR—

THE BOY WHO MADE HIS PILE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

HOW MATT WARNER GOT A JOB AND AIDED BEAUTY IN DISTRESS.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Vincent Staples, foreman of the machine shop connected with the Crandall Works, in the big, bustling town of Darien, curtly of a poorly dressed boy, with a bright face and an alert look, who had entered the room on the second floor of the tall brick building where Staples was boss of all he surveyed.

The air vibrated with the low swish of leather belting passing around numerous pulleys, together with the hum of the pulleys themselves; the buzz of many machines running at a high speed, intermingled with the harsh grinding sound of metal against metal; the pounding of hammers; the rasping of files, and all the other nerve-tingling noises that go to make up a machine shop in full operation.

Half a dozen grimy-looking men, with their sleeves rolled up above their elbows, exposing brawny bare arms, were distributed about among the machines, while as many more, similarly attired, stood at intervals along a rude wooden bench facing a row of windows that admitted light and air to the room.

All were working hard at various jobs that claimed their whole attention.

Vincent Staples himself was the biggest and brawniest man of the lot, not unlike a human ox, with a great leather apron covering his broad expanse of body from his knees to his neck.

He had been a blacksmith in his day, and looked the character yet.

"Can you give me a job?" asked the boy, with a respectful air.

"A job, eh?" ejaculated the foreman, taking in the applicant from head to foot with a critical glance.

"Yes, sir."

"Ever work in a machine shop?"

"No, sir."

"Humph! What brought you here, then?"

"I thought I'd like to learn the business. I'm handy with tools, in a way. It comes kind of natural to me. I've always been interested in machinery. I believe I'd make a good mechanic if I got a chance to learn the business."

"Oh, you do?" replied the foreman, with a quizzical stare.

"Yes, sir. I'd rather work in a machine shop than—"

"Than what?" asked the foreman, sharply, as the boy paused.

"Go back to tending store."

"So you've been tending a store, have you? I don't see that a store-boy is any use around here."

"If you'd give me a trial I'd—"

"I've got no time to monkey with new beginners," replied the foreman, shortly.

"Then you won't give me a chance?"

"No. I've got no use—"

The sentence ended in a grunt, for the boy dashed suddenly forward and butted him in the stomach with considerable force, sending him staggering back a foot or two.

At the same moment there was a swish through the air and something struck the wall near at hand with a dull thud.

Vincent Staples quickly recovered his balance and with an angry snort made a rush at the boy, catching him by the arm.

"You little imp, what did you do that for?" he roared, raising his ponderous hand to administer a cuff that the lad would have remembered, had he caught it.

"Look there, sir," said the boy, pointing at a piece of steel still quivering in the wall where it had struck with force enough to imbed one end several inches into the plaster and laths beyond. "That would have taken you in the head if I hadn't saved you the best I knew how."

The foreman looked at the bit of iron, measuring the height of its flight with his eye, then he swung around and saw the pale face of one of the men standing by an iron lathe.

His quick glance saw the empty space between two parts of the machine where a few moments before a piece of steel had been revolving at lightning speed, and he comprehended at once what had happened.

Then he released the boy's arm, and looked at him in a strange way.

"Boy," he said, huskily, "you saved my life. I am grateful to you. Shake hands."

The young stranger accepted the grimy fist.

"What's your name, my lad?" said the foreman, in a tone that was now distinctly friendly.

"Matt Warner."

"How old are you?"

"Nearly eighteen."

"Belong to this town, don't you?"

"As much as anywhere."

"Live with your parents, I suppose?"

"No, sir; I'm an orphan. I've been living with Moses Kline, the storekeeper, for whom I've been working, but as I've left his employ I've got to take my things elsewhere to-day. I haven't got a place yet, but I thought I'd try to get a job before I hunted for a room, for I want to live as close to my new place as possible."

"I'll give you an opening in this shop and let you learn the business if you cotton to it," said the foreman.

"Thank you, sir."

"You needn't thank me. I owe you something for what you

did for me, and you can count me as your friend from this out. I live a few blocks away and have a spare room which you may have for a nominal sum. It will soon be noon when we knock off for dinner. My daughter brings me a warm dinner in a pail. Wait down in the yard. I will meet you there and introduce you to my daughter. She will take you around to the house and make you acquainted with her mother. You can then see the room and if it suits you bring your things around in time for supper, and to-morrow morning I'll start you in here and see what I can make of you."

Vincent Staples shook the boy by the hand once more, and turned away.

Matt Warner walked out of the machine room greatly pleased at having secured work where he could familiarize himself with the tools and machinery that appealed to his taste.

He had never been contented at Moses Kline's store, where he had been obliged to work fourteen hours daily, with two hours additional on Saturday night, as well as three hours on Sunday morning, for \$3 per week and his keep.

He had no idea what pay he would receive at the machine shop, but he didn't suppose it would be much at first.

However, he hoped it would be enough to pay his way until he was worth more.

If he didn't get enough he would have to draw on his little fund of \$100 he had saved up during his term of service at Mr. Kline's store.

After leaving the machine shop, he walked down the narrow stairs to the yard, which was filled with tiers of barrels and piles of cases that were being loaded on trucks to be conveyed to the railroad station a few blocks away.

Matt watched the shipping of the merchandise with a great deal of interest.

To be out of the way, he perched himself on a lone box that stood against one of the fences, with his legs dangling in the air.

Presently he saw a swell-looking young man issue from the back door of the office and look superciliously around the yard.

He walked over to the men who were loading one of the trucks, and after watching them for a few moments, he commenced to find fault with one thing or another.

"I wonder who he is?" thought Matt. "Seems to be one of the bosses, from the way he acts. I wonder if I'll ever be able to put on as much style as he does? I don't think I'd care to be quite such a dude, even if I was worth a million."

At that moment a very pretty girl, between sixteen and seventeen years of age, came into the yard with a tin double-decker dinner-pail in her hand.

"I guess that's the foreman's daughter," thought the boy. "She's a peach, all right."

The girl advanced into the yard, keeping near the fence on the side where Matt was roosted.

The swell-looking chap noticed her, and crossed over to head her off.

He came up with her by the time she was close to the boy.

Matt then had a good look at both of them.

The young man gave every evidence of being somewhat under the influence of liquor, though he walked steadily enough to deceive a casual observer.

"Good-day, Miss Staples," he said, planting himself before her. "Delighted to see you looking so charming to-day. Fit enough to kiss, 'pon my word."

The girl drew back and looked disturbed.

"Brought your father's dinner, I see. I'll call a man and have him take it up to the machine shop, and then you'll do me the honor of going to lunch with me."

"Please let me pass, sir," said Miss Staples.

"Why so coy? I've long desired the opportunity to express to you the sentiments that your beauty inspires in me. Surely you, a common workman's daughter, must appreciate the honor I would confer on you by taking you to lunch and the matinee afterward. I will give you a swell time, 'pon my honor. I will."

"You've been drinking, Mr. Crandall, or you wouldn't speak to me in the manner you are doing. I beg you to permit me to pass."

"Drinking, Miss Staples! Nonsense! Merely a couple of high-balls to get up an appetite. Allow me to relieve you of your pail."

"I wish you would go away, Mr. Crandall," said the girl, backing toward the box on which Matt was seated.

"You refuse to go to lunch with me, then?"

"Certainly. I wouldn't think of doing such a thing," she replied, with some spirit.

"And you want me to leave you?"

"I wish you would."

"Then I will have to oblige you, I suppose; but you'll give me one kiss from those cherry lips of yours, won't you?"

He stepped forward, seized her by the arms, and tried to snatch a kiss.

The girl screamed, and tried to release herself.

He pulled her toward him, and would probably have succeeded in accomplishing his object but for Matt, who thought it high time to interfere in her behalf.

After the second scream for help left her lips, the boy jumped off the box and struck Crandall a stinging blow in the face with the flat of his hand.

As the young man released his hold on her, and turned upon his aggressor, Matt gave him a shove that landed him upon his back in the yard.

"Get over to the door, quick, Miss Staples," said Matt, motioning her to pass. "I'll see that he does not molest you further."

"Thank you," she said, with a grateful look, passing quickly by him just as the noon whistle blew for cessation of work.

Matt then faced the young dude who was trying to get on his feet, but with little success, for the shock had sent the fumes of the liquor into his head, and his efforts to rise were both futile and ludicrous.

CHAPTER II.

MATT BEGINS HIS CAREER AS A YOUNG MECHANIC.

The men in the yard had naturally noticed the trouble, but not one of them made an effort to go to Crandall's assistance.

The young gentleman was not popular in the establishment, and his downfall at the hands of a strange boy gave the eye-witnesses a whole lot of satisfaction.

Crandall, whose other name was Arthur, was the nephew of the president of the company that owned the works.

He held the lucrative job of secretary to the corporation, which was something of a sinecure, for he had little to do except attend the monthly meeting of the board and keep a record of its transactions.

He spent the major part of his time sporting around town with a fast set who had more money than brains, but when he visited the works he always tried to make his presence felt among the employees.

On several occasions he had noticed Kittie Staples bringing her father's dinner to him at the noon hour, and her fresh young beauty greatly impressed him.

He believed that the girl would be highly flattered by any little attention he might condescend to favor her with, and with that idea in his head he made up to her.

Kittie, however, was a sensible girl, and she realized that, owing to the difference in their social status, there could never be anything in common between her and the nephew of the head of the works.

So she tried her best to avoid him, but did not always succeed, as in the present case, when Matt had to interfere in her behalf.

Seeing that Crandall was only making an exhibition of himself, Matt stepped forward and assisted him to rise.

The young man seemed to have no recollection that Matt was the cause of his mishap, the fumes of the high-balls confusing his brains entirely.

He stood gazing vacantly around as the boy brushed him off, and when Joe offered his escort as far as the office, he accepted it with tipsy gravity, and offered the lad a quarter at the door, which Matt refused to accept.

Mr. Staples was standing at the employees' entrance talking to his daughter, and he beckoned Matt up.

Kittie had not told her father anything about Crandall's conduct, as she knew it would make him very angry, and might lead to trouble.

"Kittie, this is Matt Warner," said her father, when the boy came up.

Kittie smiled, and blushed.

She was a bit surprised, too, that her father was acquainted with the boy who had interfered in her behalf.

"Matt, this is my daughter, Kittie," the foreman added.

The boy bowed, and he and Kittie shook hands.

"You haven't told me your own name yet," said Matt, to the foreman.

"Why, I thought I had. Well, it's Vincent Staples."

"Thank you, sir."

Kittie then saw that the boy was only a very recent acquaintance of her father's.

"Matt came up to the shop a little while ago, looking for a job," explained her father. "It happened while we were talking together that a piece of steel got loose in some way from one of the machines and flew straight at my head. I would have been brained by it, I fear, but for Matt's prompt action. He shoved me back just in the nick of time, and the steel buried itself in the wall. Well, I'm going to take him on at the shop in the morning, and as he's looking for a room in this neighborhood, I invited him to take the small spare bedroom at our house. So take him over with you, and tell your mother to show it to him."

Kittie said she would, and somehow she was rather pleased to think that there was a probability of the good-looking boy, whom she had taken an instant fancy to, coming to live at their house.

Mr. Staples turned away and carried his dinner-pail upstairs to the shop, while Matt accompanied Kittie to her home.

"It was very kind of you to interfere in my behalf," the girl said, as they passed out at the gate, "and I am very, very grateful to you."

"You're welcome," replied the boy.

"It was funny that he didn't make a row with you about it afterward. Why, he said nothing at all, and actually permitted you to brush him off."

"He was loaded, and the shock of his fall made him forget all about what had happened. I'll bet that he doesn't remember speaking to you."

"I should be glad to believe that. Why, his conduct was outrageous. The idea of him trying to kiss me right there in the yard before all the men. I was dreadfully mortified, and I really don't know what I should have done had he really kissed me."

"Who is he, anyway?"

"His name is Arthur Crandall. He's the nephew of the president of the company that owns the works."

"Does he work in the office?"

"I believe not, but father told me that he is secretary of the company."

"He seems to be well fixed, for he is a swell chap."

"He lives with his uncle on Bradhurst avenue."

"That's the finest street in town."

"Yes. The richest people live in that neighborhood."

Matt and Kittie felt almost like old friends when they reached the Staples home.

Kittie introduced Matt to her mother, to whom she delivered her father's message.

Matt was shown the small spare room, and he declared it suited him in every way.

Even if it had possessed many drawbacks he would have been glad to take it in order to live in the same house with Miss Staples, with whom he was already half in love, for, in his opinion, she was the nicest girl he had ever met.

Mrs. Staples, who was a pleasant, motherly woman, invited Matt to take lunch with her and Kittie, and he accepted.

"I'll fetch my traps over some time this afternoon," he said. "I've got only a grip and a small trunk."

"The room will be ready for you whenever you come," replied Mrs. Staples.

About five o'clock Matt got an expressman to carry his belongings to the Staples house for a quarter, and he went along himself without extra charge.

"We shall look upon you as one of the family," said Mrs. Staples, as he started to go to his room, "so you must make yourself at home."

Kittie had told her how Matt had saved her father from a serious injury, if not death, and the good woman felt that she could not do too much for the bright-looking boy, in whom she already felt a motherly interest.

Work ceased at the works at half-past five, and Mr. Staples was home by six.

He found Matt in the dining-room, reading an evening paper.

Supper was soon on the table, and all sat up.

"You must eat hearty, Matt," said Vincent Staples. "It is against my principles to have anybody go hungry in this house."

"Thank you, sir. I will endeavor to hold my end up," laughed the boy.

Mr. Staples was rather a jolly man in his way at home, though he held that side of his nature in check at the shop.

It is not good policy for a foreman to become too familiar with his hands, as it has a bad effect on discipline.

Matt subsequently found that Mr. Staples was careful to show no partiality toward him in the shop, but after working hours it was different, and the boy, on his part, did not fail to treat the foreman with the respect that his position called for, taking his orders and instructions and saying nothing, just as if he and Mr. Staples were not the best friends in the world.

Next morning Matt went to the works with the foreman and began his career as a young mechanic.

CHAPTER III

THE MODEL THAT WOULDN'T WORK THE RIGHT WAY.

After that Kittie brought two dinner-pails to the works at noon, one of which was intended for Matt.

"I don't think you ought to burden yourself with an extra pail for me, Kittie," he said, when she appeared the first day he was on the job. "I can easily get a light lunch at a cheap restaurant around here."

"Oh, it's no trouble for me to do so. I can bring two just as well as one, Matt," she replied, with a smile.

"Well, it's very kind of you and your mother to go to so much trouble on my account. If I can only find some way to return it I shall be happy."

"Don't worry about it. Take the good things that come your way and say nothing. That's the way I do."

"Do you? I'm glad to hear it."

Her words put an idea in his head.

A few evenings later he invited her to go out for a walk.

She readily agreed to go, and her parents offered no objection, for they thought Matt an uncommonly nice boy, and felt that their only daughter was perfectly safe in his society.

Matt took Kittie into a jewelry store and asked her to pick out some little thing that she thought would please her mother, and which it would be proper for him to present her with.

This Kittie did.

"Now," said Matt, "I think that locket would just suit you to wear about your neck, so I'm going to buy it for you."

"Oh, I'm not going to let you spend your money on me," she said, with a shake of her shapely head.

"Oh, come now, the other day, if you remember, you told me to take the good things that came my way and say nothing, for that was what you did. Well, now I want to see you make good. If you refuse to accept that locket I will understand that it is because you don't care to take anything from me, which would make me feel badly. You ought to have some little reward for bringing me my dinner at noon. This is the only way I can show my appreciation of your kindness, so it isn't fair for you to turn my good intentions down."

"Well, I'll take it this once, seeing that you insist," she said, with a coquettish smile; "but never again, remember."

"Until the next time," he chuckled.

"No," she said, demurely, "I do not intend to encourage you to be so extravagant."

"Kittie, I haven't known you very long, but still I feel that there is nothing too good for you," he answered.

She blushed rosily, not so much at his words, as the way he said them, and somehow or another she felt happier after that, and thought a whole lot more of Matt than perhaps she ought to have done.

Mrs. Staples was very much pleased with her present, and thanked the boy for it, though she could not help chiding him just a little bit for spending his money on her.

Mr. Staples also greatly appreciated the lad's kindly act, for he understood the motive which had induced him to do it, and Matt rose still higher in his estimation.

Kittie showed her parents her new locket, and they said it was very pretty.

Her father chaffed her a little over it when Matt was not present, and the girl fled from the room with a face as red as a full-blown rose of the same color.

Altogether, Matt made a great hit with his new friends, who endeavored to make things as pleasant as possible for him, and he privately congratulated himself on having secured such a nice home in place of a cheerless room among people who would never have been much else than strangers to him.

Three months passed away and Matt Warner had not only proved himself a willing and useful assistant in the machine shop, but he was beginning to show signs of considerable mechanical talent.

He gave great satisfaction to the foreman, and had made himself quite popular with all the hands in the shop.

Mr. Staples gave him all the instruction he consistently could, and also placed him at the service of the best men in the room, with the hint that they should help the boy ahead in the business as much as possible.

This the men were glad to do, as they found that Matt picked things up very rapidly and retained what he learned.

One day Matt, while poking around the shop during the noon hour, after he had disposed of his dinner, found a working model of a horizontal engine, with driving-rod, fly-wheel, steam-chests complete, and a new kind of steam condenser.

Some man who had worked there months before had designed the apparatus and put it together, but the machine had failed to pan out in one very important feature that he was unable to rectify, so he had abandoned the working-model, and it had stood for a long time in a corner of the shop accumulating rust and dirt.

Matt pulled the thing out and looked at it with much interest.

He asked one of the men what it was, and was told what it had been built for.

"Parks couldn't get his new-fangled condenser to work," said the man.

"Why not?" asked the boy.

"Give it up. He tinkered at it every day during the noon hour for a long time, and finally gave it up in disgust. When he went away he left the model here."

"It's a wonder he did not take it with him. He might have found the solution of the difficulty some time."

"Possibly, had he lived, he might."

"Is he dead?"

"Yes; poor chap. He was run down by a freight train soon after he went to another shop, and that wound him up."

"The model belonged to him, didn't it?"

"Yes."

"I wonder if I could have it?"

"What could you make out of it?" asked the man, curiously.

"I don't know that I could make anything out of it, but I'd like to look it over and study it."

"Ask Mr. Staples. Probably he'll let you have it, for it doesn't belong to the shop. I don't believe it will do you any good, though. If the man who schemed it out of his head couldn't make it go, after all the time he spent on it, and he was a first-class mechanic, I guess you, who have just begun to learn the business, won't be able to do anything with it."

"I'm not expecting to make it work, but I think it will be good practice for me to study the construction of the model. It ought to give me other ideas. I should like to pull it to pieces and then see if I can put it together again."

"Oh, I see what you're aiming at," said the man. "It won't do any harm for you to use it as a kind of object lesson, and may do you a whole lot of good. Just you tell Mr. Staples why you want it and he'll let you have it, for I notice he is trying to push you ahead as much as possible."

So Matt asked the foreman if he could have the model.

"Certainly you may have it," replied Mr. Staples. "What are you going to do with it? Clean it up and use it to study up the principles of the steam-engine?"

"That was about my idea," answered Matt. "Hopkins told me that a man named Parks put it together as a working-model to demonstrate some improvement in the condenser."

"That's right. Parks was a clever fellow, but his scheme was not practicable. The modern condenser, of which there are two types in general use—the surface condenser and the jet condenser—is about as perfect as human ingenuity can make it."

"What did Parks expect to accomplish that is not already done?"

"His idea was to make an absolute vacuum in the condenser."

As Matt knew scarcely anything about a steam engine, and absolutely nothing about the workings of a condenser, Mr. Staples' remark was like so much Greek to him.

"I suppose you mean by that, keeping the air out altogether," he said, because he knew that a vacuum is said to be produced when air is more or less completely removed from the interior of a closed vessel.

"That's about the size of it," nodded the foreman, as he relighted his pipe.

"Is it impossible to make an absolute vacuum in a condenser?"

"I believe it is."

"Then why did Parks waste his time trying to do the impossible?"

"Don't you know that when some people of an inventive turn of mind get a certain idea into their head, which nine people out of ten can see is impracticable, it is almost out of the question to convince them that they are wrong?"

"Is that the way it was with Parks?"

"Yes. Steam is condensed by cold water. In the surface condenser the exhaust steam comes in contact with a large area of metallic surface, which is kept cool by contact with cold water. In the jet condenser the exhaust on entering the chamber comes in contact with a jet of cold water. In either case the entering steam is condensed to cold water, and in consequence a partial vacuum is found. Understand?"

Matt nodded.

"Now, if a sufficient amount of cold water was used, the steam on entering would instantly condense, and a practically perfect vacuum would be obtained were it not for the fact that the feed water of the boiler always contains a small quantity of air, which passes with the exhaust steam into the condenser, and therefore partially destroys the vacuum. To get rid of this air the condenser is fitted with an air-pump. Parks' idea was to get rid of the air without the aid of an air-pump. He claimed that if he could do that he would make both fame and fortune. He didn't succeed, though several times he said he had it."

At that moment the whistle blew and work was resumed in the shop.

CHAPTER IV.

TROUBLE IN THE SHOP.

It took the odd moments of Matt's own time for a week to clean up the model, but he worked with great industry at the job and finally had the thing in the shape it was when the maker abandoned it.

A steam-pipe with a cock in it ran up one corner of the room.

Parks had tapped it and inserted the cock in order to get live steam to experiment with in his model.

A thick rubber tube formed the connection between the cock and a smaller cock on the little engine.

Matt found the tube imbedded in the dust, and Mr. Staples explained the use it had been put to.

One day when the boy had the engine in perfect condition, he attached the tube to both the model and the cock in the steam-pipe, and turned a little live steam on.

The engine began to work away at once.

The steam that entered the condenser escaped through an opening in the top, for it didn't condense, the cold water contact being missing.

Matt didn't mind that, since all that he was really interested in at that moment was the working of the miniature engine.

It was admirably constructed, being perfect in every detail, and it operated with a smoothness that delighted the boy.

The other men in the room gathered around with their pipes in their mouths to see it work, and all agreed that for a mechanical toy it was a corker.

"All you need to do now is to build a toy imitation of one of our machines here, with a driving pulley, stretch a piece of stout tape from the fly-wheel of the engine to the pulley, and you'll have the makings of a miniature work-shop," said one of the machinists.

As the model stood on a shelf out of any one's way, it wasn't necessary to move it when the whistle blew.

Matt, however, took the precaution to remove the tube connection and hide it for fear that one of the boys in the building might get on to it some time when he was not there, and by turning on too great a volume of steam, damage the model, which he wouldn't be able to repair owing to his lack of mechanical knowledge.

For some time Matt amused himself during the noon hour with his working engine, studying its rhythmic movements and pondering over the ingenuity of man which had produced such a wonderful bit of mechanism.

He would have liked to put the condenser into working order, but some parts of it were not in evidence, and these he could not supply himself, neither could Mr. Staples with whom he consulted on the subject.

"Go down in the engine room, Matt, and look at the condenser there," the foreman told him. "Have a talk with the engineer. He'll be able to tell you more in five minutes than I could in a month."

So for a week Matt haunted the engine-room and ques-

tioned the engineer about the construction and working of the jet-condenser attached to the big engine.

He learned a whole lot in that time, but he was too ignorant yet of mechanics to turn this information to any practical account.

However, his conversations with the engineer greatly interested him in the stationary engine, and he began taking books on the subject from the Mechanics' Library of the town, and reading them up.

He soon discovered that he would only be able to acquire a superficial knowledge in this way.

That if he wanted to get thoroughly acquainted with the steam engine he must go to work in a different way.

The only right way was to get practical instruction in an engine-room.

As he did not intend to throw up his job in the shop for such a purpose, which after all was only a side issue with him, he asked Mr. Staples how he could get around the matter.

"You're young yet, Matt," the foreman said. "Better let this new enthusiasm of yours rest a while. No one can tackle two things at once and do justice to either. Give your attention to the shop and learn to become a first-class mechanic. Afterward, if you feel so disposed, you can study up engineering."

Matt agreed that Mr. Staples' advice was good, and determined to follow it.

He did not entirely abandon his engineering fad, but continued to read up on the subject, getting the engineer of the establishment to explain the more difficult points.

Thus six months passed away, during which Matt made great progress as a young mechanic, and was considered by all hands as an almost indispensable adjunct of the shop.

He often saw Arthur Crandall around the premises, but he never came into the machine-room, probably because he considered the place too dirty.

The young dude made friendly advances towards Kittle Staples on several occasions since the affair mentioned in the first chapter, but as he happened to be quite sober he did not attempt to repeat his former familiarity.

Matt was generally on hand to protect her should she stand in need of it, but he was not called upon to exercise his chivalry in that direction.

One afternoon Crandall surprised the mechanics of the machine shop by stepping off the elevator into the room.

Matt was working at a bench near the elevator door and saw him first.

"I wonder what brings him in here?" the boy muttered. "By George! He's loaded, too. Probably that accounts for it."

Crandall walked unsteadily about the unoccupied space near the elevator, then stopped and looked around the room.

Mr. Staples came up to him and asked what he wanted.

"You're Vincent Staples, aren't you?" said the secretary of the company.

"Yes, that's my name. What can I do for you?"

"I want to talk with you. Come outside somewhere."

"You can talk with me here, can't you?" replied the foreman.

"How would you like to have a raise in your wages?" said Crandall, with a feeble kind of a grin.

"A raise in my wages!" exclaimed the astonished man.

"That's what I said. I can fix it so you can get it."

"I don't quite understand what you are trying to get at," said Staples, who was puzzled to account for such an offer, except it was due to the fact that the young man was not strictly in his right senses.

"Staples," continued Crandall, "you're a fine mechanic. Understand? A fine mechanic. The best we have. And you have a fine-looking daughter, too."

"Sir!" ejaculated the foreman, who could not see why his only child should figure in the conversation.

"She's the fairest of her sex, Staples. Knocks many of our Bradhurst avenue girls into a cocked hat, and they're pretty slick articles when they get themselves up in their best style."

"Just leave my daughter out of your conversation, Mr. Crandall, and tell me what brought you in here," said Staples, in a slightly huffy tone.

"I couldn't leave your daughter out, for I came to talk about her. Understand? I've met her several times, but I find her rather coy. Thinks I'm too tony for her, I guess. Now I want you to put in a good word for me with her. Let her know that I would only be too delighted to escort

her around to places of amusement and treat her to dinner afterward. My automobile will be always at her service with or without myself. Understand? Any day she'd like to take an outing in the suburbs let me know, Staples. Drop a note in the office addressed to me, and I'll send my chauffeur with the machine around to your house."

As Crandall proceeded the foreman waxed hot under the collar.

His daughter was the apple of his eye, and he watched over her with a jealous care.

Arthur Crandall might be the secretary of the Crandall Company, and rich to boot, but Staples regarded his conversation about his daughter as insulting.

There was a wide gulf between his child and Crandall, in the eyes of the world, though privately Staples considered his Kittle as the peer of any man and woman on earth.

He deeply resented the familiar way that young Crandall talked about the girl, and he was about to cut the dude off short when Crandall said:

"You fix it so I can take her out to-morrow afternoon, Staples, and I'll see that you get \$5 a week more in your pay envelope."

"What's that?" roared Vincent Staples, the foreman, springing at Crandall and dealing him a blow on the chest that sent him staggering toward the open elevator.

Seeing the young man's peril, Matt ran forward and grabbed him just in time.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROJECTED ABDUCTION.

The foreman's angry exclamation, and the blow that followed it, drew the attention of every man in the shop to the point where the disturbance was taking place.

They saw the ponderous Staples glaring at the secretary of the company as Matt dragged him away from the edge of the elevator shaft.

As no one had heard a word of what had passed between the man, except the foreman's furious ejaculation, they could not understand what the trouble was about.

At that moment the elevator came down and paused at the floor for a machinist to get off.

Staples immediately seized the disconcerted Crandall by the arm, bundled him aboard the elevator, and told the man to take him downstairs to the office.

The foreman, with a deep cloud on his face, walked up and down the room several times in a way that showed he was much exasperated, but he gradually cooled off, and gave his attention again to the business of the shop.

Matt was as much in the dark as any one else as to the cause of the foreman's attack on Crandall.

"The only way I can account for it, is that the dude must have said something to Mr. Staples that he wouldn't stand for. I can't imagine what it could be, though, for the foreman couldn't help seeing that Crandall was pretty tipsy, and consequently not fully responsible for what he said."

That's the way Matt argued to himself, and he was very much surprised because Mr. Staples had lost his temper, and struck a person who was not only greatly his inferior in strength, but of such consequence in the establishment.

When the shop closed for the day, and he started for home with the foreman, as was his custom, he learned from Mr. Staples' lips the true cause of the brief scrap.

"Does he imagine because I'm an employee of the company that he has a right to pay his unwelcome attentions to my daughter?" growled Mr. Staples, after he had explained matters to Joe.

"He was half shot. He didn't realize what he was saying," replied Matt.

"Whether he did or not, it was in his mind, and the liquor brought it out. I suppose he's seen Kittle bring our dinners around. She never told me that Crandall noticed her in any way."

"Geel!" thought the boy. "If Mr. Staples knew that the dude tried to kiss Kittle the day I caught on to the job in the shop, and that he would have succeeded only that I interfered, I'm afraid there would be something more doing in the secretary's way."

Matt, on the score of prudence, did not volunteer any information on the subject.

He decided that it was up to the girl to tell the facts to her father if she thought proper to do so.

When they reached the house Mr. Staples opened up the subject with his daughter at once.

He wanted to know to what extent Crandall had ever no-

ticed her, and whether she had given him the least encouragement.

Kittie admitted that the young man had spoken to her several times, but that she had turned down his advances every time in a way that ought to have convinced him that she wanted nothing to do with him.

She did not refer to Crandall's attempt to kiss her, because she knew her father would make things pretty sultry for the young man even at the risk of losing his position with the company.

Mr. Staples did not tell his daughter what occurred in the shop that afternoon, but he told his wife later on, and she told Kittie next day, though Matt gave her an inkling of the truth that evening.

It was decided that the girl was not to come to the works any more, and thereafter Matt and the foreman carried their dinner-palls with them in the morning like the other men who did not frequent a restaurant.

Staples expected to be called down to the office to give an explanation to the head of the establishment for his attack on his nephew, but nothing like that happened, and matters went on as before the dude's visit.

Crandall himself, however, had a perfect recollection of the incident, though he did not mention the matter to his uncle, because he did not care to face an explanation of the affair.

He determined to get square with the foreman just the same, and in a way that would enable him to kill two birds with one stone.

He took counsel with a couple of boon companions, who were as unscrupulous as himself, and they readily agreed to help him out.

All three believed that their money and social positions would protect them if trouble cropped out of it.

Their plan was to kidnap Kittie Staples just to scare her father, and have her held a prisoner at a certain roadhouse a few miles outside of Darien.

This house was kept by an ex-pugilist, and was frequented by the fashionable young men of the town.

In a large barn attached to this establishment, glove contests were frequently pulled off on the quiet, and as the son of the chief of the Darien police belonged to the swell set, any suspicions as to what went on at the roadhouse were sidetracked, and the officers of the law never visited the place.

Cock fights, and even an occasional dog fight, were also held at the aforesaid barn, and were largely attended by the guided youth of the town, who found such sport sufficiently exciting to attract them any time the tip was passed around among them.

The ex-pugilist made his profits out of the business done at the bar, though a price of admission was charged at every event.

Before the kidnapping scheme could be carried into effect it was necessary to enlist the proprietor of the roadhouse in the enterprise.

As considerable risk would attach to it, there was no doubt that the man would insist on being well paid.

Crandall, however, didn't mind the cost, provided it was within reasonable limits, so long as he got square with the foreman of the machine shop.

The girl would be well treated, and only deprived of her liberty.

She would be under charge of the pugilist's wife, who would see that nothing happened to her.

Accordingly, Crandall and his cronies visited the roadhouse and had a talk with the former prize-fighter, whose name was Old Hathaway.

Hathaway didn't fancy being mixed up in the scheme, but he couldn't afford to turn down such an important and profitable personage as Arthur Crandall.

The young dude had influence enough to spoil business at the roadhouse if he chose to exercise it, so an arrangement was finally made for the reception of Kittie Staples, and her sequestration at the top of the house.

The best-laid schemes of mice and men, according to a famous poet, oft go astray. And so it was in this instance.

It was necessary for the success of the enterprise that the girl should be decoyed from her home after dark.

How to accomplish this successfully puzzled the conspirators not a little, until they learned that Kittie had a young lady friend at whose house, a few blocks from her own, she often spent an evening.

Sometimes Matt accompanied her, but more often he didn't,

it being understood between them that he was to call for her around ten o'clock.

One evening, just after dark, a small boy pulled the bell at the Staples house, and when Kittie answered the ring the boy said he had brought a note for Miss Kittie Staples.

"That's my name," she said, promptly. "Give it to me. Who sent you?"

"Hattie Forrest. She said I was to bring back an answer."

"Wait a minute till I read it."

Kittie ran into the sitting-room, where her father was reading the evening paper, tore open the note and read the following:

"DEAR KITTIE: Come around to the house to-night, as I want to see you on important business. Excuse handwriting, as I burned my right hand at the stove awhile ago and I can hardly hold my pen. Don't fail to come, as you will miss something if you do not. Let the bearer of this know whether you are coming or not, and when. Yours, as ever,
"HATTIE."

There was something strange about the note, besides the handwriting, which did not look like Hattie's, but then the writer had explained that she had crippled her hand at the stove and could hardly write.

The tone of the note did not sound like Hattie, still it was quite possible that Miss Forrest had dashed it off in a hurry and at haphazard.

At any rate there was no reason why Kittie should suspect the genuineness of the note, so she ran back to the door and told the boy that she would be over to Hattie's house in half an hour.

As soon as the boy got this reply he hurried off.

Matt had gone out a few minutes before to visit a friend of his, who lived near Hattie Forrest, leaving word that he would be back by half-past nine.

Kittie told her mother that she had received a note from her friend Hattie, asking her to come around that evening, and she told her mother to be sure and tell Matt to come after her.

Then she went upstairs to change her gown and fix up a bit.

In the meantime Matt had gone to his friend's house.

When he arrived at his destination he found, much to his disappointment, that his friend had gone out for the evening, so there was nothing for him to do but to return home again.

As he was in the act of opening the gate in the hedge which cut his friend's home off from the street, an automobile dashed up and stopped in front of the house.

Three young men sprang out, and Matt, thinking they were visitors to the house he had just left, draw back to let them enter.

After looking up and down the quiet, shady street, they stepped up alongside of the hedge within a couple of feet of the spot where Matt stood in the gloom.

"The boy ought to be up this way with an answer in a few minutes," said one of them, taking a box of cigarettes from his pocket and offering it to each of his companions. "then we'll know whether Miss Staples is coming or not."

Matt gave a start of surprise when he heard Kittie's name mentioned, and he began to wonder who these chaps were and what was in the wind.

The flash of a match lit up the faces of the three for a moment or two as each lighted his cigarette, and to Matt's astonishment he recognized one of the young men as Arthur Crandall.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG MECHANIC TO THE RESCUE.

"Suppose the girl brings an escort with her—that young mechanic, for instance, who is boarding at her house—that is liable to lead to a complication," said one of the young men.

"Oh, I guess we can handle him, too," replied Crandall, carelessly. "If he's with her we'll give him a tap on the head, first, and while one of us is attending to him, the other two can throw the shawl over Miss Staples' head and hustle her into the machine. The moment we're off, we'll be safe."

"You've notified Hathaway that he may look for us to bring the girl to his place to-night?" said the third young man.

"I've attended to that," replied Crandall, flipping the ashes from the end of his cigarette.

"Staples is sure to notify the police when his daughter doesn't return home at the usual time and he finds that she hasn't been at Miss Forrest's."

"What do we care?" asked Crandall. "Nobody will suspect us of carrying the girl off, and the roadhouse will be the last place they'll think of in connection with her."

"Here comes the boy now," said one of the others.

"Go and meet him, Brett," said Crandall. "You hired him to deliver the note, and there is no need for him to see us."

The person addressed as Brett immediately went forward and met the boy several yards away.

Matt, standing in the shadow of the hedge, had been almost paralyzed with astonishment at the revelation he had been listening to.

That Arthur Crandall and two other well-to-do young men of the town should be engaged in a plot to abduct Kittie Staples fairly amazed him.

There was no doubt in Matt's mind that this was Crandall's scheme, for he had been annoying the girl with his unwelcome attentions.

"The roadhouse they expect to take her to must be Hathaway's place," muttered Matt. "That's the only roadhouse I know of anywhere around. It's a sporting place, where I've heard they have glove fights once in a while. All the town dudes flock there to have a good time. What a nerve Crandall has to go into a trick of this kind. He's supposed to be a gentleman, too. I suppose his object is to give Kittie a scare. Wants to get back at her because she won't accept his attentions. Or, maybe this is the way he's trying to revenge himself on her father for the blow he got in the shop. It's a foolish piece of business, anyhow, and he's bound to get in trouble over it. However, it's up to me to put a spoke in his little game. Mighty lucky thing that I've got on to it, for Kittie would get the fright of her life if those chaps succeeded in running off with her."

Brett now returned to Crandall and his companion.

"Miss Staples has swallowed the bait and will be along this way in half an hour," he said. "She'll have to come alone, for the kid told me that he met the mechanic, Matt Warner, going somewhere."

"Good," replied Crandall, lighting a fresh cigarette. "We'll have things all our way. Go and get the shawl out of the machine. Otis, so we'll be all ready to grab her suddenly when she passes."

Otis obeyed instructions.

"How long do you expect to keep the girl at Hathaway's?" asked Brett.

"A week or two. Long enough to break her old man up, and make him think she's disappeared for good. He's got to pay up for that blow he gave me. I'd have had him fired from the shop if I could have seen my way clear to do it."

"Why couldn't you? Aren't you secretary of the works?"

"Of course I am, but that doesn't give me authority over the hands," replied Crandall. "The superintendent runs the works, and he takes his orders from my uncle. Staples is a good hand, and he wouldn't be discharged just to oblige me."

"I think you're easy, Crandall," said Otis. "If I was in your shoes, and a common workman laid his hand on me in the way you said Staples did to you, I wouldn't rest till I got him out of the works. Workingmen are getting altogether too independent nowadays."

"That's the fault of the unions," chipped in Brett. "If I had anything to say about the matter there wouldn't be such things. They're a constant menace to the capitalist. The workman used to know his place, but now he thinks he's as good as the man who hires him."

"The legislature ought to put unions out of business," said Otis. "If something isn't done soon in that line the laboring man will be dictating his own terms, and the manufacturer will either have to knuckle down or quit business."

"Oh, cut it out," growled Crandall. "The girl will be along in a few minutes and we won't be ready for her. We mustn't make a slip-up of this business. If she was to let out a scream it would alarm the block. Give me that shawl, Otis. I'll attend to her myself. I can't afford to take any chances."

While they were talking, Matt was figuring how he could block the scheme at the critical moment.

He was one against three, but he calculated that his sudden appearance on the scene would take them so by surprise that he would be able to save Kittie.

He was strong and pretty handy with his fists, so he didn't have much doubt about the ultimate result.

"I wish my friend Taylor was here," he thought, meaning the boy who lived in the house behind him. "I'll bet the two of us would make it pretty interesting for these dudes."

As his friend Taylor wasn't there he had to depend entirely on himself.

So he waited with some impatience for the crisis of the affair.

"Here she comes," said Brett, presently. "Get ready for business."

Unsuspecting of what was ahead of her, Kittie Staples came tripping up the street.

She saw the automobile drawn up alongside the curb, but paid no attention to it.

As she drew nearer she made out the three young men standing close to the hedge, apparently engaged in conversation.

She supposed they were waiting for somebody in the cot-take behind the hedge to come out.

She did not dream they were waiting there for her.

Matt couldn't see her from the spot where he stood, owing to the top of the hedge which obstructed his view.

He held the gate open an inch or two in readiness to rush out.

"You speak to her, Brett," said Crandall, "and when she stops and turns I'll throw the shawl over her head, then we'll both grab her and force her into the machine. I guess you'd better get on the front seat, Otis, and be ready to start off the moment I give the word."

"All right," said Otis, crossing and getting into the auto.

In a few moments Kittie Staples was abreast of the conspirators, and then Brett stepped up to her, raising his hat politely.

"I beg your pardon, miss, can you tell me where—"

Kittie stopped and looked at the well-dressed young fellow as he spoke.

The moment she turned her back toward the hedge, Crandall shook out the folds of the shawl and dashed at her.

Matt, who was watching him closely, sprang out through the gateway, and just as the shawl fell over the girl's head the young mechanic struck Crandall a heavy blow under the ear that sent him staggering over toward the auto, dragging the shawl with him.

"Run, Kittie, run!" cried Matt, to the frightened girl as he aimed an upper-cut at Brett's jaw.

The young fellow, taken by surprise, failed to dodge in time, and Matt's fist made his teeth rattle like a pair of castanets.

Matt gave him no time to recover, but smashed him in the eye with his left, following that up with a crack in the nose with his right.

Brett, staggered by the assault, jumped into the auto to escape further punishment, and Matt once more turned his attention to Crandall.

Kittie had recognized Matt's voice, but instead of running she held her ground, for the whole thing was so unintelligible to her that she could not understand the situation.

"Who in thunder are you?" demanded Crandall, as Matt rushed at him.

"Find out," replied the boy, striking at the dude.

Crandall parried the blow and called on his companions for help.

Otis, who had been thunderstruck at Matt's sudden appearance and whirlwind attack on his companions, jumped out of the auto when he saw that their assailant was alone, and only a boy.

Brett also recovered his nerve again, though his face was badly damaged, and he responded to Crandall's call.

The tables were now turned on Matt, and he was forced upon the defensive himself.

Kittie, perceiving that the young mechanic in whom she took so much interest, was in serious danger of being knocked out by the three young men, uttered a shrill scream for help, which echoed up and down the street on the still night air.

"Confound it!" roared Crandall. "The game is up and all on account of this chap. Tackle him low down, Brett, and then we'll finish him."

Brett, who had been a good football player at his college, flung his arms around Matt's thighs and slipped his hold to his knees.

The other two closed in on him at the same moment and the boy was bowled over on his back.

His head struck upon the stone pavement and he was rendered unconscious.

Kittie continued to scream for help, and people in the immediate neighborhood threw up their windows to ascertain what the trouble was.

A man came out from one of the near-by houses and started for the scene of trouble.

"We've got to skip, and skip quickly," he said, hurriedly.

"Throw this chap into the machine and we'll be off," replied Crandall, grabbing Matt by the head and shoulders.

"What the dickens do you want with him? Let him be there," said Brett, impatiently.

"No," answered Crandall, doggedly. "This fellow spoiled our game and gave me a crack under the ear that I feel yet. Bundle him in and we'll carry him out into the woods where we can get square with him at our leisure."

As there was no time to argue with Crandall, and he seemed determined to have his way, Brett reluctantly helped carry the young mechanic to the auto and dump him in between the two seats.

Otis was already seated in the chauffeur's place, and the moment Brett climbed in alongside of him he started the vehicle, and off they went with a rush.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COLLISION IN THE ROAD.

"Confound the luck!" growled Crandall, who was furious over the failure of their well-laid plans. "Only for this boy we'd have succeeded. People who butt in where they're not wanted ought to be made examples of."

"He knows how to use his fists, blame him!" responded Brett. "I'll have a black eye to-morrow as sure as fate, and my nose feels as sore as a boil. The first blow he gave me nearly broke my jaw."

"I can't understand how he came to be on hand at the critical moment," said Otis. "Seems as if he was on to us, and he pitched in when we were unprepared for his attack. I wouldn't be surprised but it is that young mechanic who boards with the Staples. You know him by sight, Crandall. Strike a match and see if it is he."

Crandall pulled out a silver match-safe, selected a match and struck it under the shelter of the front seat, as the auto left the last houses of the town behind and spun along the country road in the direction of Hathaway's establishment.

Flashing the flame over the unconscious boy's face he saw that he was the young mechanic, Matt Warner.

Crandall uttered a subdued imprecation.

Although he had an indistinct idea that Matt had saved him from pitching down the freight elevator-shaft the afternoon the foreman of the machine-shop struck him, he felt no especial gratitude toward the boy.

He had a standing contempt for people who belonged to the working classes, and as Matt was a plain mechanic, and a long way from being a skilled one at that, he regarded the lad with very little consideration.

"He's the chap you took him for," he said to Otis.

"You mean the young mechanic?"

"I do."

Otis whistled.

"Have you any idea how he got on to our game?"

"Not the slightest."

"He must have been hiding behind the hedge while we were talking."

"I don't see what brought him there."

"Nor I; but the evidence points that way. If he heard all we said he'll expose us, and the girl's father will probably have us arrested for attempted abduction."

"Oh, fiddlesticks! Nothing can be proved against us."

"I don't know about that," put in Brett. "Miss Staples will swear that one of us threw a shawl over her head."

"What if she does? She's got to identify us, which she won't be able to do, as she only caught a glimpse of us in the dark."

"The mechanic will be able to do it if he was watching us long enough. Remember, he may have seen our faces in the matchlight when we lighted our cigarettes."

Crandall uttered another imprecation.

He was supposed to be a young gentleman, but his language wasn't always on a par with his social standing.

In fact all the young dudes who frequented Hathaway's were not over-particular at times, in respect to the words they used.

"If I was sure your suspicions were right I'd——"

"You'd what?" asked Brett, as he paused.

"I'd go in for putting this cad where he wouldn't be able to testify against us."

"Where is that?" asked Brett, curiously.

"Oh, I guess Hathaway would fix him for us."

"Is that where you intended to take him, that you were so anxious to get him into the auto?"

"No. I intended that we should take him out in the woods

beyond here, tie him to a tree, give him a good licking, and leave him to get back to town as best he could."

"Is that still your intention?"

"I should like to do it if he doesn't know too much."

"How are we going to find out how much he knows? He isn't likely to tell us, if we ask him," said Brett.

"I suppose not," replied Crandall. "As there is a doubt on the subject I guess we'd better take him out to the road-house, explain the situation to Hathaway, and leave the fellow with him with directions to pump him."

"And suppose Hathaway finds out that he knows enough to make trouble, what then?" asked Otis.

"He must be kept out of the way until the affair blows over."

"At Hathaway's?"

"I don't know of a better place."

"But Gid may object to taking charge of him on the ground that it might compromise him."

"He agreed to hold Miss Staples for a week or two, and that was a more ticklish job than holding this chap."

"It will cost you considerable to come to such an arrangement with Hathaway," said Brett. "If you could get him shipped off somewhere I think it would be the better plan."

"I'll see Hathaway about it. Your idea is a good one."

Matt had regained his senses while the foregoing conversation was going on, and realizing that he was being carried somewhere in the auto, he listened to the talk with eager interest in order to find out all he could, which he might subsequently be able to use against the three young dudes.

The boy's position, jammed in on the floor of the vehicle, was not a pleasant one.

Furthermore, one of Crandall's shoes rested on his upturned arm, while the other was planted on his thigh.

He couldn't make a move without attracting the secretary's attention, and Matt had an idea that it would be best for him to play possum for the present.

Having a good pair of ears he could distinctly hear all that passed between the three young men.

Matt wasn't particularly concerned about what the immediate future held in store for him.

He was confident that he could take care of himself under all circumstances.

As long as Kitten had escaped the trap designed for her, he was contented.

He even chuckled quietly when he thought of the smash in the ear he had given Crandall, and the three cracks he had treated Brett's face to.

The auto was sweeping around a turn of the road and was going at a tidy clip.

Otis, who was doing the driving, divided his attention pretty evenly between his duty in hand, and Crandall on the rear seat.

The result was he didn't see a farm wagon jogging along in the middle of the road ahead, until Brett happened to notice it himself and yelled: "Look out, Bob. Shut off and put on the brakes or we'll be into that rig."

At the same time he grabbed the bulb alarm and squeezed it, sending forth a succession of most unearthly "honks."

That sound woke up the driver ahead and he turned out of the way.

Otis, however, was unable to stay the flight of the machine quick enough to clear the wagon.

The thick rubber tire of the auto struck one of the hind wheels of the wagon with considerable force, smashed it and swung the vehicle around.

The auto also veered out of its course and ran sideways into the fence, striking a pole, demolishing part of the fence, and then coming to a stop with a suddenness that jarred all hands badly.

"This is a high old note," cried Crandall, springing out into the road.

His companions followed suit.

A few yards back the driver of the wagon was also standing in the road, gazing ruefully at the broken wheel which had let that end of the vehicle down on the sole support of the hub.

"Release the brake, Otis, and let us back the machine into the road," said Crandall. "I hope it isn't damaged so we can't proceed."

The three got busy, but the auto was stuck fast in the ruins of the fence.

"We'll have to borrow that man's horses," said Crandall, at last. "Our strength is not sufficient in this emergency."

"You'll have to pay him for his broken wheel or it isn't likely he'll accommodate us with the use of his horses to help us out. That is where he has the bulge on us," said Brett.

"Well, let's go over and argue the matter with him," said Crandall.

Accordingly, quite forgetful of their prisoner, the three young men walked over to the spot where the teamster stood figuring out the problem of how he was going to proceed on three wheels, with the load of agricultural implements he had.

CHAPTER VIII.

MATT'S ESCAPE AND RETURN TO TOWN.

Matt had been shaken up as well as the others in the auto when the machine came into contact with the fence, but he was not hurt beyond a cut lip.

While Crandall and his companions were trying unsuccessfully to back the auto he saw the chance to jump out and make his escape in the darkness.

He did not take immediate advantage of the opportunity, however, as he saw that the machine was stuck fast, and he thought he'd wait awhile to see what the dudes were going to do under the circumstances.

When he heard Crandall talk about getting the teamster's horses to pull the auto clear, he concluded to slip away before they put this plan into practice.

He waited till they walked away, and then crawling out on the side of the broken fence, he crept away under cover of the bushes, till he reached a point opposite the disabled wagon.

There he stopped to watch the progress of negotiations between Crandall and the driver of the farm vehicle.

"I want to borrow your horses to pull my machine back into the road," said the secretary of the Crandall Works.

The teamster favored him with an angry stare.

"Are you the owner of that auto?" he asked.

"I am."

"Are you going to pay me for the damage you've done my wagon?"

"I am not responsible for that. You took up more than your share of the road, and when we tooted, you moved aside so slowly that we struck your wheel, and that caused the auto to shy into the fence where it is stuck. I think I have a better case against you than you have against me. I'll let you off if you'll lend me your horses."

"Why don't you back with your own power? I've seen them machines move both ways."

"It won't back for some reason. We want the use of your horses to pull it clear so we can examine it."

"Give me \$3 to pay for a new wheel and I'll help you get your machine into the road."

Crandall handed him a note and then the driver assumed a friendly attitude.

He attached his horses to the rear of the auto and they dragged it back to the road.

The teamster then rehitched his horses to his own wagon and drove off slowly, walking in the road himself.

Crandall took off his coat and crawled under his auto to see what the difficulty was there.

While he was thus employed, Brett remembered their prisoner and looked for him.

He found he had disappeared.

"The beggar recovered his senses while we were talking to the farmer and made his escape," he said to Otis. "Crandall will be hot when he finds out that the mechanic has taken French leave."

Crandall called for a couple of tools and he patched up the trouble so that the auto was in shape to resume its journey.

"All aboard," he said. "Let's get on."

"No use of going any further," said Brett, "the prisoner has skipped."

"The dickens!" ejaculated Crandall, looking at the space between the seats where their late prisoner had been stowed, and finding the place vacant. "When did he get away? Why didn't you let me know in time and we'd have given chase to him."

"I didn't see him when he got away. That must have happened while we were talking to the farmer," replied Otis.

Crandall said a number of things expressive of his chagrin at the escape of Matt Warner, but the exhibition did not do him any good.

Finally he said:

"Of course he's started back for town. We'll turn back, too. Maybe we'll be able to recapture him."

Brett shrugged his shoulders.

Both he and Otis thought it very unlikely that the young mechanic would permit himself to be recaptured.

As a matter of fact, Matt hadn't started for town yet.

He was still crouching behind the fence, watching his late captors.

He saw them get into the machine, turn around and start back for Darien.

Then he came out from his hiding-place and followed on foot.

"I've got quite a walk before me," he muttered. "It must be all of four or five miles on the road to Newgate. Well, a little extra exercise won't do me any harm."

Presently he heard the sound of wheels behind.

A light wagon, driven by a boy, came up.

Matt hailed him and he reined in.

"How far are you going?" asked the young mechanic.

"To town."

"Give me a ride and I'll give you a quarter."

"Jump in," replied the youth.

Matt sprang up beside him and offered him the money.

"Can you spare it?" asked the boy, thinking that if Matt was tramping the country road that he could not have much money.

"Sure. Take it."

"I'll be glad to have it, for I don't see many quarters; but I don't want to rob you."

"Don't worry about robbing me. There is more where that came from."

"How far have you walked?" asked the boy. "From Newgate?"

"Hardly," laughed Matt. "I've walked about a quarter of a mile."

"That all? Where did you come from? There isn't a house this side of the roadhouse, and that's two miles from here."

"I started from the turn in the road."

"But you must have walked to the turn."

"So," replied Matt.

"How did you get there, then?"

"In an automobile."

"No auto passed me."

"The car came from Darien."

"Then I ought to have met it."

"No. It only went as far as the turn, where I got out, and then it went back again."

"Why did you get out at that lonely spot? And how is it that you are going back the way you came?" asked the boy, looking puzzled.

"Well, you see, the chaps in the auto brought me out this way against my will and I am taking advantage of your team to get back to town without walking."

"Did they bring you out to make you walk back?"

"No. They had another purpose which went wrong on account of a collision we had with a farm-wagon."

"I met a wagon going on three wheels," said the boy.

"That was the vehicle we butted into."

Just then they came in sight of the auto.

It was standing still and Crandall was tinkering at it again.

"Is that the auto ahead?" asked the boy.

"I judge that it is. Drive by it quickly. I don't want those fellows to hold you up and drag me off the seat."

"Why should they do that?"

"Because they're down on me and want to get me in their power."

"Oh," said the boy, whipping up his mare.

Matt bent over and turned his face away as they came up with the auto and passed it.

He was not recognized by either Brett or Otis, much to his satisfaction.

Before they had gone on half a mile they heard the "chug-chug" of the auto behind at a spanking gait.

"Keep well to the right," said Matt. "Give them as much of the road as possible."

The boy did so, and again Matt bent down and his face averted.

The auto swept by like a small whirlwind, its occupants paying very little attention to the two boys perched on the wagon-seat.

In a few minutes the machine was out of sight, and Matt breathed easier.

In due course they entered the town, and Matt got down at the nearest point to his home.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when he reached the Staples' cottage.

There was a light in the sitting-room.

He entered with his latch-key, and the sound of his footsteps brought Kittie into the hall.

Her eyes were red as if she had been crying, and she looked worried.

The moment she saw him she sprang forward with a glad cry.

"Oh, Matt, where did those men carry you off to?" she exclaimed, catching him by the hand. "Father has notified the police, and a couple of officers have been sent out to hunt for you and the auto."

"They carried me about five miles out along the county road and then I managed to get away from them."

"Who were those young men? Do you know? One of them threw a shawl over my head, and when he pulled it away you were fighting with them. I heard you call out to me to run, but I didn't, because I couldn't understand why I should do so."

"I suppose you will be surprised to learn that you were the cause of the whole business," said Matt.

"Me the cause?" ejaculated Kittie, greatly surprised. "What do you mean?"

"Are your father and mother in the sitting-room?"

"They are."

"Then we will go in there and I will make one story of it."

Matt's appearance was hailed with satisfaction by Mr. and Mrs. Staples.

They, too, wanted to know how far he had been carried in the auto, and what, if anything, its occupants had done to him.

"I'd better begin my story at the beginning, and then you'll understand it better," said the young mechanic. "I think you'll admit that it is a serious matter, and will call for the services of the police. To begin with, Arthur Crandall, aided by two of his friends, intended to kidnap Kittie to-night, and no doubt would have succeeded, had I not been on the spot to queer them."

Had a bombshell exploded in the little room it could scarcely have created a greater sensation than Matt's words.

"What's that?" gasped Mr. Staples. "Arthur Crandall intended to kidnap our Kittie?"

"Yes, sir. The note that Kittie got to-night through a small boy named Harry by Hattie Forrest, was not sent by Hattie."

"It wasn't?" cried Kittie, in astonishment.

She was not aware that the note was a fake one, because after Matt's abduction in the automobile she had run home as quickly as possible to carry the news of the trouble Matt had got into to her father.

"No, it wasn't. Arthur Crandall got somebody to write it in order to decoy you out of the house to the spot where he and his friends were waiting with his auto to catch and carry you off to Hathaway's roadhouse, where you were to be kept a prisoner for a week or two."

"How do you know that this is so?" asked Mr. Staples, looking very serious, indeed.

"Because I overheard enough of what Crandall and his friends said while they were waiting for Kittie to come along to form a correct idea of the game they were up to. I was hiding behind the hedge just inside of the gate of the front yard of the To be honest, I had gone to see Will. I didn't see him, however, because he was out."

Matt then went on and narrated everything that had happened, including what Crandall and his associates, Brett and Otis, had said to one another with respect to their designs on Kittie.

When Kittie came up, Brett stepped up and spoke to her, continued Matt. "You remember that, don't you, Kittie?"

"Yes," she replied, breathlessly.

"That was to attract your attention and give Crandall the chance to throw the shawl he had over your head. He did throw it over your head, as you know, but that was where I chipped in. I sprang at Crandall and dealt him a blow under the ear. He fell back and dragged the shawl off your head, and then you jumped out of the way as I shouted to you to run."

He then told his story, narrating the conversation he

had overheard in the auto after he recovered his senses and found he was being carried off in the vehicle.

He told about the collision in the road, his escape, and his return to town in the wagon.

When he concluded, Mr. Staples started up and reached for his hat.

"Where are you going?" asked his wife.

"To secure a warrant for the arrest of Arthur Crandall and his two associates. This attempt to carry our daughter off is the most outrageous piece of business I ever heard of. If there is justice in this town those young men shall be punished, even if it costs me my job at the works."

There was wrath and determination on the foreman's face as he strode hastily from the room.

CHAPTER IX.

THE AWKWARD PREDICAMENT OF CRANDALL, BRETT AND OTIS.

Staples secured warrants that night at the home of one of the city magistrates for the arrest of Arthur Crandall and his friends Brett and Otis, on the charge of attempted abduction of Kittie Staples, and the warrants were put in the hands of the police to execute.

Brett, whose first name was Clarence, was the son of the president of the Darien National Bank, the leading financial institution in town; while Frank Otis was the son of the most distinguished lawyer in Darien.

A detective went to the home of each of the young men, who lived within a short distance of one another on fashionable Bradhurst avenue, but although it was long after midnight none of them was at home.

The detectives hovered around the houses all night, but their quarry did not show up.

The escape of Matt Warner, whose importance as a witness against them in the event of their arrest for the attempted abduction of Kittie Staples they fully understood, upset all their calculations, and after a consultation, they decided that it wouldn't be healthy for them to show themselves in Darien until their parents and friends had hushed the trouble up.

They therefore took the night express, which stopped at the town at midnight, and early next morning registered at a hotel in the chief city of the adjoining State.

The Darien morning papers had the story of the attempted kidnapping of Kittie Staples by Crandall, Brett and Otis, and the failure of the detectives to find the accused warranted the belief that the young men had gone into hiding.

Of course the story created a profound sensation at the breakfast tables of the best society in the town, and carried consternation into the homes of the more young ladies of fashion.

While the friends of the alleged kidnapers regarded it simply as a lark on the part of the young chaps, the general public viewed the matter in quite a different light.

The afternoon papers, after their reporters had fully investigated the case, said the affair was an outrage, and that the three young men ought to be made an example of as an object lesson to others who, owing to their family connections, fancied they could commit high-handed acts with impunity.

Public sympathy flowed toward the Staples family, while Matt Warner was regarded as a plucky boy who had done the best he could to save the girl under strenuous circumstances.

Matt was the hero of the shop, and of the whole establishment for that matter, that day, and for many days thereafter.

Vincent Staples was called to the private office by Mr. Crandall, and asked for a general statement of the unfortunate affair.

The foreman was a man who didn't mince his words when he knew he was in the right, and he was outspoken in regard to the treatment his daughter had received at the hands of Arthur Crandall.

He told the president of the works that the matter was altogether too serious to be overlooked, and that he intended to prosecute his nephew, as soon as he was arrested, whether he lost his job in consequence or not.

Mr. Crandall assured him that he regretted the incident deeply, and did not intend to screen his relative from the consequences of his foolishness.

He told the foreman that, much as he deplored the necessity of the case being sifted out in a court of justice, he could not blame the attitude assumed by Staples in de-

fense of his daughter, and therefore, no matter what came of the affair, he would not be discharged from the works.

Crandall, Brett and Otis communicated with their relatives in a day or two and asked for funds.

They alleged that the whole matter was merely intended as a joke, and denied in the most positive terms that they had any intention of holding the girl a prisoner even over night.

The newspaper stories they denounced as sensational, and almost wholly devoid of truth, printed largely to prejudice popular opinion against them, because they were connected with the aristocracy of Darien.

The feelings of the general public were more or less against the wealthy, and the newspapers believed it was to their interest to pander to that sentiment.

The immediate relatives of Clarence Brett and Frank Otis naturally sympathized with their own flesh and blood.

Money was forwarded them, with expressions of confidence, and measures taken to quash the trouble.

Mr. Crandall was not such an easy mark.

He wrote a letter, unaccompanied by a remittance, to his nephew, in which he expressed his opinion of that young man's conduct in a manner that made his hair curl.

"If you will return and face the accusation like a man I will provide a lawyer to defend you, but if you are convicted you must take your medicine," concluded the president of the Crandall Works.

The letter almost gave young Crandall a fit, for, unlike the letters received by Brett and Otis, his uncle wasted no sympathy on him, and, what was worse, sent him no money, so that he was obliged to borrow from his two friends to pay his way.

Lawyer Otis invited Mr. Brett and Mr. Crandall to confer with him at his office in respect to the awkward dilemma in which the three young men had placed themselves.

Both gentlemen responded, but Mr. Crandall's attitude at the interview was not particularly encouraging, as he was satisfied his nephew was guilty, and wouldn't be able to clear himself.

As an accessory was just as guilty in the eyes of the law as the principal, he told Lawyer Otis and Banker Brett quite frankly that their sons were in a bad scrape, and he didn't see how they were going to get out of it without paying some kind of a penalty.

Banker Brett said he'd rather lose \$50,000 than have his son brought up in court on such a serious charge, and suggested that compensation be offered to Miss Staples as an inducement to her and her family to let the matter drop.

Mr. Crandall said that he could not wholly approve of the suggestion, as it was in the nature of a bribe.

He added that Vincent Staples, the girl's father, was not an easy man to deal with on such lines.

He might resent the offer to the extent of notifying the newspapers that a bribe had been offered his daughter to withdraw the charge, and that would tend to complicate matters for the young men.

Still, he said, if the matter could be arranged, he would pay his share toward it.

The result was, an emissary waited on Mr. Staples at his home a few days later, and in the most delicate way asked if some arrangement could not be made by which the charge against the young men could be withdrawn.

"No, I don't think so," replied Vincent Staples, flatly.

"But, my dear sir, consider the position in which these young gentlemen, scions of three of the most influential families in Darien, are placed," said the visitor, who was Lawyer Otis's right-hand legal assistant.

"That's their lookout, not mine," replied the foreman, shortly. "Think of what my daughter would have suffered had they carried out their outrageous design."

"We have the positive assurance from the young men that the whole affair was merely a lark. They had no intention of abducting your daughter. They merely intended to give her a short ride in the auto and then leave her at her home."

"I don't care anything about their assurances. They'll say anything to squeeze out of this affair. Matt Warner happened to be in a position to overhear their plans and he knows that there was no joke about the thing at all."

"But this Warner's evidence is uncorroborated and will be valueless in court. The young men's denial will be as good as, if not better than, his statement."

"His evidence will be corroborated by circumstances, and the decoy note now in our possession. You

will find when the case gets into court that Warner's testimony will count."

The visitor wanted to see the note in question, but Mr. Staples declined to show it on the ground that he had been advised not to do it.

The emissary then introduced, in an indirect way, the suggestion of compensation to Miss Staples, not as a bribe, he wished Mr. Staples to understand, but simply as an act of justice on the part of the young men's parents out of sympathy for the girl.

Mr. Staples cut him short by saying that no such thing would be considered.

The lawyer, having exhausted his stock of diplomacy, then withdrew and reported to Mr. Otis that his mission was a failure.

He told the big lawyer that the existence of the decoy note was a feature of the case that was decidedly serious, and would, if introduced in court, tend to substantiate the uncorroborated testimony of the boy, Joe Warner.

"The best thing you can do, in my opinion, is to try and buy off the young mechanic," said the chief clerk. "He is the stumbling block in your way. If you can fix matters with him, the charge against your son and his companions will not hold water, even with the decoy note."

"Very well," replied Lawyer Otis. "I leave the matter to you. Offer him any price, \$50,000 if necessary, and the money will be forthcoming."

The young lawyer bowed and left the room.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH THE YOUNG MECHANIC REFUSES TO BE BRIBED.

Two weeks had passed away since the night of the attempted abduction of Kittie Staples, and the public had forgotten all about the affair.

Crandall, Brett and Otis were having a good time in New York, while waiting for their relatives to fix things up so they could return to Darien without fear of the law.

Kittie and Matt were on more intimate terms than ever, Matt was already half in love with Kittie, and he showed his feelings, in many ways.

The foreman's daughter, however, did not occupy his thoughts wholly.

During the day he devoted himself entirely to getting ahead in the mechanical work of the shop, and he was making great progress.

He occupied half his nights with the study of engineering.

He had made the acquaintance of the night engineer of the public water works, and he spent many hours of the week in his company in the engine-room.

The engineer explained the workings of the big engine that did duty during the day, and the smaller one he ran himself at night.

He showed Matt how to start and stop it, and let him do it several times.

He let him oil up all these parts, not provided with automatic oilers, in fact gave him as much practical experience with the engine as possible.

Under such favorable conditions it wasn't long before Matt could handle an engine with a good deal of confidence.

One night Matt had a long talk with the engineer about the condenser.

He had brought along a book on engineering which had sectional drawings of both surface and jet condensers, with a full explanation of their construction and the work they performed in connection with the steam-engine.

He went over it bit by bit with the engineer, who explained in a simple way what he couldn't understand from the printed matter.

The boy finally wanted to know if it wasn't really possible for an expert to invent some method for doing away with the air-pump.

"I don't think so," replied the engineer.

"I should think an arrangement could be studied out by which the small amount of air in the feed-water of the boiler could be prevented from entering the condenser with the exhaust steam, that would produce a perfect vacuum in the condenser, and the condensed water could be returned to the boiler by a different method than the air-pump."

"I guess your idea has been threshed out by the best engineering heads during the past hundred years, and the results now in operation are about as close to a perfect vacuum as will ever be achieved," replied the engineer.

"There was a man named Parks, who worked in our shop

"some time before I came there, who tried to work the subject out but failed," said Matt.

"I'm not surprised to hear that he failed."

"He was quite a mechanical genius in his way. He made as perfect a model stationary engine, of the horizontal type, as could be put together. He left it behind him and as he is dead the foreman gave it to me to monkey with if I wanted to."

"Does it work like a big engine?"

"It does, except with respect to the condenser. Parks made the engine in order to demonstrate the value of his own condenser in which he aimed to produce a perfect vacuum. Some day I mean to study up the principles he worked upon and see if I can reach the end he was after."

"It won't do you any harm to do so, on the contrary you will learn a whole lot, but I'm afraid you'll never arrive at the solution you have in your mind. But while trying to reach the impossible you may make some valuable discoveries in another line that might ultimately lead to both fame and fortune. Such things happen almost every day. The alchemists of the Middle Ages devoted their whole energies to the transmutation of base metals into gold. They did not succeed a little bit, but for all that, they laid the foundations of one of the most important of sciences—namely, chemistry."

One evening when Matt started for the engine-room of the water works, he was approached by a well-dressed young gentleman, none other than the chief clerk of Lawyer Otis.

He handed the young mechanic his card, and requested the privilege of a short conversation with him.

"I suppose we can talk as we walk along, Mr. Page," said Matt, wondering what the gentleman wanted with him.

"Certainly. It will save time, as you appear to be in a hurry."

"What do you wish to see me about?"

"It's rather a delicate matter, to be frank with you, Warner. To begin with, I may say that I represent the families of the three young men implicated in what seems to me the almost ridiculous charge of trying to abduct Miss Staples. You are a sensible young fellow, Warner, and so I am sure I can talk with you in a frank way. The young men in question undoubtedly committed a foolish act in trying to play a practical joke on so estimable a young lady as Miss Staples is, for upon my honor it was really only intended as a joke, though it appears you took it in the light of a criminal act."

"You may regard it as a foolish prank, Mr. Page, but I have better reason to size it up in its true light," replied Matt, with some dignity. "I know of my own knowledge that Arthur Crandall, the ringleader of the affair, has annoyed Miss Staples for many months off and on, by his unwelcome attentions. One afternoon not so long ago he came into our shop, where Mr. Staples is foreman, and made a proposition to Miss Staples' father, that you, had you been in his place, would have considered insulting. Mr. Staples in his indignation struck Crandall, and being a powerful man, the blow was not a light one. Crandall would have had Mr. Staples discharged for that if he could have managed it, but he found he couldn't. Nevertheless, he meant to have revenge, and decided that the most effective way by which he could get back at the foreman was through his daughter—a cowardly way, you must admit. Well, he resolved on kidnaping the girl with the help of his friends, Brett and Otis. While it is true that Brett and Otis had no interest themselves in the matter, beyond a willingness to accommodate Crandall, still they are of age, and college-bred men, so they must have known that such an enterprise was a criminal one in the eyes of the law, and so by going into it with their eyes open they invited the trouble in which they now find themselves. If you think they are deserving of sympathy, I don't."

Page listened to the young mechanic with not a little surprise.

His common-sense summing up of the situation, as well as the good language he used, proved that the shop-boy was a well-educated lad.

"A most uncommon boy this," thought the law clerk. "He may be a mechanic in a business sense, but he has the education and deportment of a young gentleman. He springs from good stock. His people must have come down in life. What is bred in the bone is bound to manifest itself sooner or later. Dear me, I'm afraid it will be quite useless for me to try and buy this young man off. I'll have to try the art of persuasion. If that fails, I'll give it up."

"I must admit that you have stated the case in a straight-

forward and honest way, Warner, but I think, considering no harm came to Miss Staples, you are a bit too hard on the foolish young men. At present they are out of the jurisdiction of this State, and it would require legal process to bring them to Darien to face the charge, supposing they could be found, which isn't at all certain while this cloud rests on them. Now supposing they are brought back, or induced to return of their own accord, and they should be convicted on your evidence and sent to prison, can't you see how that would almost ruin their young careers? And who would really be the chief sufferers? Who but their parents, who represent the best society of this town? It would be a lasting disgrace to their families as well as themselves. After you have thought this phase of the matter over, Warner, I am sure you will think twice before you will consent to be the instrument for bringing such a thing about."

"That's all right, Mr. Page, but you forget one thing—a man or a boy is expected to do his duty, no matter how unpleasant that may be to himself or others. I am the chief witness in this case, and my first duty is to Miss Staples. It isn't her fault, nor mine, that the young fellows mixed up in the outrage—for it was an outrage, no matter how their friends may look at it—have brought themselves and their parents to the verge of disgrace. If I am called on to testify against them I've got to do it, whether I care to do so or not. I haven't any choice in the matter. If your errand is to try to induce me to act differently it is a failure."

The clerk was nonplussed.

However, he felt that he could not draw off without carrying out his instructions, which were to try and buy the boy off if all else failed.

He was almost satisfied now that this could not be accomplished, and he approached the point with some misgivings.

"You are a young man on the threshold of life," he said to Matt, "and I judge that your future will depend entirely on your own exertions."

"Yes, sir," replied the young mechanic, regarding this new turn in the conversation with some surprise.

"It would be a great benefit to you if you had money or an influential friend or two at your back," the lawyer went on.

"I suppose so, but we can't all expect to be so fortunate."

"It remains with yourself to acquire both."

"What do you mean?" asked Matt, greatly astonished.

"If you could see your way to assure the friends of Crandall, Brett and Otis that you would not appear against the young men in this abduction case, their gratitude would assume a very substantial form."

"Oh!" ejaculated Matt.

"I wouldn't be surprised if they presented you with a cash testimonial of \$25,000, or even more."

"As a bribe to hold my tongue, eh? Well, as you seem to be their emissary, please tell them that there isn't money enough in the United States to buy me off. Good-evening," and Matt Warner, with head erect, walked across the street to the engine-room of the power-house, leaving the lawyer much chagrined at the unsatisfactory result of the interview.

CHAPTER XI.

PLOTTING AGAINST THE YOUNG MECHANIC.

Next morning Chief Clerk Page reported to Lawyer Otis the non-success of his mission to persuade or bribe the young mechanic to alter his determination to appear against the three young dudes if they were brought into a court of justice.

This was a great disappointment, both to Mr. Otis and Banker Brett, who thought that the power of the mighty dollar was irresistible.

Both gentlemen immediately wrote to their sons, inclosing a new bank-draft, telling them that there was no immediate prospect of their returning to Darien without danger of arrest, owing to their inability to make any terms at all with Matt Warner, the chief witness in the case.

Mr. Crandall also wrote a brief note to his nephew, inclosing a draft for a sum sufficient to meet the young man's expenses for awhile.

The three dudes read their letters, which all came by the same mail, and then gathered in Crandall's room for a consultation.

"New York is all very well in its way, but I'd like to get back to my native heath," said Crandall.

"Same here," nodded Brett.

"Ditto," interjected Otis, laconically.

"It appears from our letters that that beastly young mechanic is the stumbling-block in our path," went on Crandall.

"That's what he is," replied Brett, gloomily.

"I'd like to know what kind of a phenomenon he is," said Otis. "My governor writes me that Page, his clerk, offered him \$25,000 for his silence, but he turned the offer down. If I was offered half that amount for a similar service I'd take it quick as a wink. Why, \$25,000 would set that chap up for life. He must be a fool."

"We've got to do something, chappies," said Crandall. "We can't remain away from our stamping-grounds forever."

"Better stay in New York than go to jail," said Brett.

"An iron cot and bread and water, or soup, or some other rot that is on the prison bill-of-fare, wuldn't suit me for a copper cent," growled Otis.

"It seems to me that we'll have to take the bull by the horns," said Crandall.

"Kindly elucidate your meaning," grinned Brett.

"We must remove the stumbling-block from our path."

"Meaning the young mechanic," said Otis.

"I don't mean any one else," answered Crandall, with an ominous frown.

"How is he to be removed?" asked Brett.

"I have an idea that Hathaway is the party to do the trick if the compensation is sufficiently weighty."

"I'll guarantee that money is no object with my people where my welfare is concerned," said Brett. "If you think you can bribe Hathaway to get this mechanic away from Darien, and keep him away, for any reasonable amount, I'll engage to produce my share."

"So will I," said Otis.

"As it won't do to put our proposition down in black and white, it will be necessary for one of us to visit him at the roadhouse."

"Not me, thank you," said Brett. "I'd rather be excused from visiting the scene of our scrape until things have been fixed up."

"I also entertain a serious objection to running my head into the lion's jaw for the present at least," put in Otis. "As you have proposed the plan, I move that you be unanimously selected as a committee of one to call on Hathaway and make the best arrangement and terms with him you can."

"There is no occasion for you to worry, chappies. I intend to go myself. I understand Gid from the ground-floor up, and consequently I wouldn't let anybody else undertake the mission."

"You are so well known in Darien that you are almost sure to be recognized," said Brett.

"I'll bet you a ten-spot that nobody will recognize me in town," replied Crandall, confidently.

"Then you mean to go there in disguise," said Otis.

"I don't intend to take any more chances than I can help."

"What kind of a disguise are you going to use?"

"I haven't decided yet. I'm going to get a costumer to fix me up."

"He might suspect you of contemplating some crooked work and refuse to help you out."

"I don't think so. There is nothing suggestive of a crook about me."

"He might take you for a gentlemanly Raffles," laughed Brett.

"What kind of an arrangement do you expect to make with Hathaway if you reach his place all right?" asked Otis.

"I'm going to offer him a good sum to kidnap young Warner and send him off somewhere, so he won't get back until after we have had this unpleasant matter settled for good."

"Hathaway might consider the contract too dangerous to undertake. What will you do then?" said Otis.

"I think Hathaway has his price for doing most anything short of murder or manslaughter. I sized him up long ago. At any rate I will offer him enough to make his mouth water. Our people will cough up anything within reason."

"My father will," said Brett.

"And mine, too," put in Otis.

"My uncle has soured on me over this, but still for the honor of the family name he won't let me go to prison if he can prevent it."

"When do you intend to start?" asked Brett.

"Probably to-morrow."

"Well let's go down to the cafe and drink success to your negotiations," said Otis.

This suggestion met with approval and they were presently standing before the hotel bar, giving their orders for three high-balls.

In the meantime, Matt, the young mechanic, was pursuing the even tenor of his way in Darien, quite unconscious that he was being plotted against.

He had told Mr. Staples about the interview he had had with Mr. Page, representative of the families of the young men concerned in the attempted kidnaping affair.

He said the gentleman had intimated that he could have \$25,000 if he would refuse to appear as a witness in court.

"That's a pretty big bribe," replied the foreman. "What answer did you give him?"

"What answer would you expect me to give him? I refused. I told him that there isn't money enough in the country to bribe me, and I mean it."

"You're one boy in a thousand, Matt," said Mr. Staples, grasping him by the hand. "A boy of your caliber is bound to make his mark in the world if he lives. You will make yours, and I trust I may live to see you at the top of the heap."

"I mean to make my way. I guess you are satisfied with the record I am making in the shop."

"Perfectly. I never saw a young fellow catch on quicker than you have. You never have to be told twice what to do, and you seldom make a mistake. The men have all remarked your capability. You are a great favorite with them because you are ready at any time to give one of them a helping hand at anything. You will surely be as popular a man as you are a boy, and that counts for a whole lot in the race of life; that is, provided—"

"Provided what?"

"Popularity does not ruin you as it has some men. However, I have little fear of that. I am sure you have a level head and can say 'No' when the word is necessary, and stick to it."

"Yes, sir. I said 'No' to Mr. Page, and I mean to stick to it."

"I don't mean that kind of 'No.' A person of honor and principle finds that easy enough to say and stick to it. What I mean is one who is popular is continually up against the temptations of life. He is supposed to be what is known as a good fellow. A good fellow is generally his own worst enemy. Many a good fellow who started out with the most brilliant prospects wound up in Potter's field. Be a good fellow within limits that do justice to yourself."

"Yes, sir. That is what I mean to do," Matt said, as he and Mr. Staples entered the house together and found supper waiting for them to sit down to it.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

The next day was Sunday, and in the afternoon Matt and his particular friend, Tom Taylor, started out for a spin on their wheels along the country road toward Newgate.

They decided to go as far as the roadhouse, six miles out of town, and then turn back.

At the head of a lane, about a quarter of a mile from Hathaway's place, stood an old deserted farmhouse, fast going to ruin.

It had the reputation of being haunted, because the farmer who built it went crazy and killed his whole family, winding up by shooting himself.

It now belonged to two minors for whom it was held in trust.

When the boys reached the lane leading to the old house Tom said:

"I say, Matt, let's go over and inspect that old rookery."

"The haunted house, eh? What do you want to go there for?"

"Just to say I've been there. People avoid it as if it was a plague spot, but I don't see anything to be afraid of."

"It's all right in the daylight, when the sun is shining as it is now, but I'll bet you wouldn't be so anxious to inspect it if it was night time," said Matt.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Tom, as they rode up the lane. "I don't believe in spooks, anyway. I don't know anybody who ever saw one."

"You ought to read the 'Transactions of the Psychological Research Society.' Maybe you'd change your mind on the subject."

"The Psychical Research Society! Never heard of it," replied Tom. "What is it?"

"Oh, it's an organization of scientists and others who have made it their business to collect data on the supernatural and investigate the same for the purpose of demonstrating beyond a reasonable doubt the actual existence of spiritual phenomena."

"Have they proved that there is such a thing as a ghost?" asked Tom, in a skeptical tone.

"They seem to think they have."

"Pooh! All bosh!"

"You ought to read their pamphlets. The books detail many marvelous facts that have come within their notice, and which they have investigated to their satisfaction," said Matt.

"Where will I find those pamphlets?"

"I got some of them at the Mechanic's Library. One of the attendants put me on to them one evening that I took out a work on engineering."

"How did he come to do that?"

"Somebody had just returned one of the books when I stepped up to the counter and he called my attention to it."

"And you took the book home and read it, eh?"

"Yes. I found it very interesting."

"And now you believe in ghosts, I suppose," chuckled Tom.

"I believe there are phenomena that cannot be explained by any natural law so far known to the most intelligent minds. Well, here we are. I see the kitchen door is ajar. Are you thinking of going inside and looking the place over?"

"Sure. Come on."

They stood their wheels against the wall of the kitchen and entered.

The boys expected to find the interior of the house as bare as a newly-constructed building.

It wasn't.

Nothing seemed to have been removed from the day it was abandoned.

The carpets, white with dust, lay on the floors.

The furniture stood about, also covered with dust and in many cases festooned with cobwebs.

Upstairs the boys found the bedclothes moldy, yellow and smothered in dust.

Tom opened the bureau drawers, but their contents had been taken away.

Their inspection showed that nothing of any value had been left in the house outside of the furnishings.

"I wonder why the furniture, carpets and other things were not taken away and sold?" said Tom. "A second-hand man would have given something for them originally."

"Probably they were left with the idea of renting the house furnished," replied Matt.

"When the new owner found that he couldn't rent it at any price I should think he would have cleaned the stuff out then."

"Well, if you're anxious to know all about it you'll have to see the owner."

"I've heard that it was left to a couple of kids who live in Newgate. If it had been left to me I'll bet I'd have found somebody to live in it, and run the farm. Seems to me it's a case of give a dog a bad name and it will stick to him."

They were standing by one of the windows on the second floor looking out.

"Hello!" exclaimed Matt. "There are a couple of men coming up the lane."

Tom looked.

"One of them is Sid Hathaway, the ex-pugilist, who runs the roadhouse."

"You mean the chunky, smooth-faced fellow?"

"Of course. The other chap doesn't look like a prize-fighter even a little bit. He seems to be all whiskers. I wonder what they are coming here for?"

"Probably Hathaway considers this haunted house as one of the attractions of the neighborhood and has brought his companion here to show it to him," said Matt.

"Say, let's go down and hide in the sitting-room closet, and when they come in the room we'll make a few ghostly noises and give 'em a scare. That's the way to do it," said Tom, who thought he had struck a bright idea.

"Do you expect to frighten a fellow like Hathaway in broad daylight?" asked Matt.

"We can try it, anyhow. It will be a good joke."

"He might not take it as a joke, and we might have reason to regret trying to be funny."

"I thought you were nervy enough to do most anything."

"I don't see any nerve about your plan. I think it is rather a foolish thing to do."

In the meantime Hathaway and the man with the whiskers entered the yard of the haunted farmhouse, and made straight for the rear of the building.

The boys, as they came downstairs, heard their footsteps in the kitchen.

Matt and Tom were in the hall near the sitting-room, which stood half open, when the ex-prizefighter and his companion entered the room.

"Dust off one of these chairs, Crandall, and we'll sit down and have our talk out here," said Hathaway.

Matt gave a start of surprise when he heard the ex-pugilist address the man with the whiskers as Crandall.

It instantly struck the young machinist that Arthur Crandall was hovering about the neighborhood in disguise with some object in view.

What that object was he wanted to learn, for he wasn't sure but it was connected with Kittle Staples.

Whispering Tom to hold back and keep as quiet as a mouse, Matt advanced to the sitting-room door and listened.

He heard the sound of thumping, as the men removed the dust from the seats of two of the chairs, then they seated themselves beside one of the windows.

"Now I'll listen to your scheme, Crandall, but mind you, I won't promise to take up with it if it's too dangerous. I've got a good business at the roadhouse, and I ain't goin' to sacrifice it just to make an extra wad. It wouldn't pay."

"I'm not asking you to do something for nothing, Hathaway. You'll be well paid if you help the three of us out of our pickle."

"You ought to have been more careful about that affair and then you and your friends wouldn't have got in trouble over it. I thought you chaps had pull enough, anyway, to get out of 'most any kind of a tight hole. Lawrence, whose old man is chief of the police department, is a particular friend of yours. Why can't you fix things through him?"

"There are warrants out for the three of us, and he couldn't sidetrack them," replied Crandall.

"What's the difference if you chaps were arrested? Your people would bail you out in no time. You needn't even see the inside of a cell."

"But we'd be tried in the end; and convicted on the evidence of that young mechanic. If it wasn't for him, we wouldn't care."

"Why don't your people buy him off? That ought to be easy."

"Well, it isn't easy. He's been offered \$25,000 for his silence and he refused to take it."

"Twenty-five thousand dollars!" whistled the ex-fighter. "Oh, come now, you don't expect me to believe that, do you?"

"It's a fact, whether you believe it or not. He seems to be one of those incorruptible chaps I thought were only to be met with in novels. Those kind of fellows give me a pain. A man who doesn't look out for number one in this world always gets left."

"He must be a remarkable boy to turn down a bribe of \$25,000. Maybe he was afraid he wouldn't get it. Was the money laid down under his nose?"

"No; but he'd have got it, all right."

"Well, what's your scheme? I take it you want to get this young mechanic out of the way for good. If you promise to turn that \$25,000 into my pocket I'll talk business with you."

"I couldn't promise any such thing. I might be able to get you \$5,000, but—"

"Five thousand wouldn't pay me to monkey with a buzz-saw."

"Five thousand is a lot of money," said Crandall.

"I know it is, but I don't believe in takin' a big risk for that sum," replied Hathaway, who thought he saw his way clear to making a much better bargain.

"Well, suppose I can raise \$10,000, will you go into this thing?"

The ex-prizefighter considered the matter.

Ten thousand dollars was quite a tempting offer.

But then there was considerable risk about the job, and he hadn't yet figured out how it could be accomplished successfully.

"I'll have to think the thing over before I give you a posi-

live answer," he said. "You want this boy kidnapped and sent off somewhere!"

"He must be sent where he can't get back in a hurry," said Crandall.

"That's the delicate part of it," said Hathaway. "The world is so blamed small these days that I don't know where in thunder a person can be sent that he can't get back again, if he wants to, in a short time."

"If somebody was paid well for preventing him from coming back, wouldn't that fill the bill?" asked Crandall.

"Well, you must give me a few days to see what plans I can make."

"How many days do you want?"

"It may take a week."

"I can't hang around this neighborhood a week."

"You needn't. You can go back to New York and I'll telegraph you when to come here with the money if I decide to go into the job."

"What's the matter with you coming to New York and seeing the three of us at our hotel?"

"I can do that. What hotel are you chaps stopping at?"

"The Castle Square."

Matt, who had taken in every word up to that point, made a mental note of the name of the hotel.

"Whereabouts is it?"

"It's not far from the Grand Central depot, where you'll land. Take a cab and tell the driver where you want to go, and he'll land you all right for a dollar."

"All right. You may expect to see me before next Saturday."

That terminated the interview, and Hathaway and the disguised dude left the haunted house.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE EXPRESS.

"Well," said Tom Taylor, after Hathaway and Crandall had left the sitting-room and the house. "what were those men saying that interested you so much?"

"They were talking about me."

"About you? Go on, you're kidding me."

"No, I'm not. You'll never guess who the fellow with the whiskers was."

"How could I, when I never saw him before?"

"You didn't recognize him on account of his whiskers. They were false."

"False!" cried Tom, in surprise.

"Exactly. That man was Arthur Crandall, disguised."

"How did you recognize him?"

"I didn't until Hathaway addressed him by name."

"Well, that beats the deck. So he's disguised in order not to be recognized around here. It's a pretty good disguise, all right. I never would have known him."

"Yes, it deceived me, too."

"What were they saying?"

"Plotting against me."

"Gee! Figuring on doing you up some way?"

"Crandall has agreed to raise \$10,000 and hand it over to Hathaway if he will kidnap and carry me off to some place from which I won't be able to get back for a long time."

"What are you going to do about it? See the police?"

"I've learned where Crandall's two friends are in hiding at this moment."

"Where?"

"I'd rather keep that dark for the present. Crandall means to rejoin them right away, and Hathaway has promised to meet the three next week at the hotel they are stopping at. We will hurry back to town, as I want to try and have Crandall arrested before he can get out of Darien. He'll probably take the express that stops here at eight o'clock. I'll take a detective to the station and point him out. That will fix him."

"How about the other two?"

"I'll have the chief of police cause their arrest by telegraph, then if they refuse to come voluntarily, the district attorney will have to get out requisition papers."

"Then they're in another State?"

"They are."

"I'll bet they're in New York, then, for that is just the place those chaps would go to."

"I won't say whether they are or not. Come, get a move on."

They left the house, mounted their wheels and started at a rattling pace for town.

On reaching the people's entrance the two friends parted. Tom went on to his own home, while Matt rushed into the house to see Mr. Staples.

The foreman was reading a magazine in the sitting-room, while Mrs. Staples, assisted by Kittle, was beginning to prepare supper.

"Mr. Staples, sorry to disturb you, but I want to tell you something very important," said Matt.

"I'm at your service, Matt," said the foreman.

"Tom and I were out at the haunted house. While we were on the premises two men came there, one of whom was Hathaway, the ex-prizefighter. The other was Arthur Crandall."

Matt then told Mr. Staples about the interview he had overheard between Crandall and Hathaway.

The foreman was greatly astonished.

"That Hathaway is no doubt rascal enough to undertake such a job for the money that is in it. It is lucky you heard about the scheme. Forewarned is forearmed, you know."

"Crandall will probably take the eight o'clock express for New York this evening. An effort must be made to arrest him at the station. Brett and Otis are stopping at the Castle Square Hotel in New York. We must have them arrested by telegraph. It is my opinion that to save themselves from a stay in the Tombs they will consent to return without requisition papers. Will you accompany me to police headquarters now?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Staples.

When they reached headquarters Matt stated the case to the assistant chief.

He consented to send a detective with the key to the station to arrest Crandall.

Matt and Mr. Staples then returned home for supper.

They had hardly finished it before the detective detailed to go to the station with the young mechanic rang the bell.

It wasn't quite seven o'clock, so they had plenty of time before them.

Matt and the sleuth walked leisurely to the railroad station, arriving about half an hour ahead of time.

There were only two or three people in the waiting-room.

Additional people dropped in by degrees, but at five minutes of eight Crandall had not put in his appearance.

Just then the express from Boston rolled in, with three Pullman cars attached.

Matt and the detective moved down the platform toward the drawing-room cars, for sleeping-cars were not needed on this train, which was due in New York at eleven.

Nearly all the passengers got aboard of the regular engine, and so Matt and the chief had an unobstructed view of the Pullmans.

There was no sign of Arthur Crandall with his whiskers.

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor, and then signaled the engineer to proceed.

At that instant a man dashed from behind the side of the station, crossed the platform with a bound, and sprang on the rear platform of the last Pullman.

It was Arthur Crandall, whiskers and all, and Matt spotted him at once.

"There he is," he shouted to the detective, bounding forward.

Catching the platform rail as the car glided by, Matt swung himself up and landed alongside of the disguised dude.

Before Crandall dreamed of what was coming, the young mechanic threw himself upon him and bore him down on the platform.

"What in thunder——" began the secretary of the works.

Matt reached for his false whiskers and tore them from his face.

"Better give up, Crandall, for I've got you dead to rights," he said, exultantly.

"Matt Warner!" ejaculated the young man, with a smothered imprecation.

In another moment the pair were struggling for the mastery on the rear platform of the Pullman, while the express, rapidly gaining momentum, speeded away into the night, leaving the lights of Darien far behind.

CHAPTER XIV.

MATT GETS HIS MAN AT LAST.

"Confound you!" roared Crandall. "I'll throw you from the train."

"I don't think you will," replied Matt, coolly. "Better give up."

Nothing more was said by either for a minute while they struggled about on the platform in no small danger of slipping off the car.

Matt maintained his position, and Crandall, who was now on the ground, tried to get up, but failed.

The train was now in full view of the station, and the

reaches its next stopping place," said Matt, in a tone that showed determination.

"I'll see if you do," snarled Crandall, renewing his struggles.

By a quick move the dude got rid of Matt's weight and threw him against the end of the car.

The shock momentarily dazed the plucky boy, and Crandall took immediate advantage of the fact to dump Matt over on his back.

Then, exerting all his energies, he shoved the young mechanic down the steps, intending to throw him off the car.

The boy's weight pulled Crandall forward, and both tumbled off into the black void alongside the train.

Under ordinary circumstances they would probably have been killed, for the train was running at a fifty-mile clip at that moment; but it happened that the car was shooting over a short viaduct that spanned a narrow, but deep stream, and they fell from the side close to the outer edge of the masonry.

Matt cleared the stonework by a hair, pulling Crandall after him.

A dive of nearly twelve feet landed them both in the rushing stream, and they went under.

Contact with the water caused Matt to release his hold on the secretary, and when they came to the surface they were yards apart.

The young mechanic struck out for the bank, which he could see outlined against the clear sky, and after a fierce struggle with the stream, succeeded in reaching the shore and climbing out on to solid ground.

He felt so exhausted he had to lie down and rest.

What had become of Crandall he had not the slightest idea.

"I thought I had him sure, but that is where I fooled myself," muttered Matt, and he lay on the bank in his wet garments and blinked up at the stars. "I wonder where he is now? Drowned, perhaps, if he couldn't swim, or ashore on this bank or the other, if luck came to his aid. In any case I've lost him, and will have to hoof it to the nearest house, and beg the hospitality of the occupants."

He rose to his feet and looked around.

He saw the glow of a switch red light in the near distance and knew that marked the line of the railroad.

There were lights here and there in the opposite direction, and Matt judged they shone from the windows of houses.

Toward the nearest of these he made his way at a swinging gait, stamping his feet down hard and flapping his arms to keep up the circulation of his blood.

In a short time he reached a small house standing close to the stream.

His loud knock brought a woman to the door.

"I've been in the river, or whatever you call it, and I'm wet to the skin," said the boy. "Can I stay here till my clothes are dried?"

"Come right in," said the woman, promptly. "You'll get your death standing outside in your soaked garments."

Matt gladly accepted her invitation.

"How did you fall into the stream?" she asked, inquisitively.

"Fell off the end platform of the Boston express."

"What an escape you had!" she exclaimed.

"I guess it was a pretty narrow one. I swam ashore, walked down in this direction, and here I am, feeling pretty good, all things considered."

The woman got a lamp and led Matt upstairs to a small room, where she told him to take off his clothes and roll himself up in the blankets.

She took his clothes down to the kitchen, started a good fire and hung his apparel up to dry.

Matt soon fell asleep, and did not wake up until the next morning.

He found his clothes, dried pressed, on a chair beside the bed all ready for him to put on.

When he walked downstairs the woman's husband met him in the hall, and invited him into the room where breakfast was waiting to be served up.

After the meal he thanked his host and hostess, and told them just how he came to be in the predicament of the night before.

They directed him to a station three miles down the road, and he took leave of them.

Still ignoring Arthur Crandall's fate, he walked rapidly down the road to catch the 9.10 local, east, which would stop at Darien.

Matt bought a ticket for Darien, which was the next stop, eight miles east.

When he stepped out on the platform the local, bound for New York, was coming in to the station, and among the passengers waiting to board it he spied Crandall, without his whiskers, but looking none the worse for his fall from the train and ducking.

The young mechanic stepped up to him as he put his foot on the car-step and, grabbing him by the arm, said:

"You're taking the wrong train, Crandall. You'll have to go back to Darien."

The young man started back with an imprecation, and tried to shake the boy off.

The tussle that ensued attracted general attention as a matter of course, and brought the conductor up.

"What's the trouble here?" he demanded, sharply.

"This man is wanted by the Darien police, and must go back to that town. He is trying to escape to New York," said Matt.

"It's a lie!" cried Crandall. "This young rascal ought to be arrested for assaulting me."

"Well, it's none of my business," replied the conductor, not able to decide upon the merits of the case. "Settle it between yourselves."

He gave the signal to go ahead to the engineer, and sprang aboard the train, which pulled out at once, leaving Crandall struggling with the boy, both surrounded by a small crowd whose sympathies were about evenly divided.

Finally the station-master came out and inquired into the cause of the trouble.

Matt told him the facts, which the crowd listened to, and which Crandall vigorously denied, threatening to sue the railroad company.

As the boy could show no authority for detaining Crandall, the station-master ordered him to release the young man.

"I won't do it," replied Matt.

"Then I'll call a policeman to decide the matter."

The station-master telephoned for one of the town officers, but long before he arrived the east-bound local came in.

The conductor of the east-bound train came up to inquire into the trouble.

It happened that he knew Crandall by sight, and remembered reading about the attempted abduction of Miss Staples by the dude and his two friends.

So when Matt stated his side of the case he got the conductor's support at once.

Crandall put up a stiff kick, and again threatened to sue the railroad company if the official interfered.

The conductor, however, believed Matt's statement that Crandall was wanted in Darien, and he called a brakeman up and ordered him to help Matt put the young man on the train.

Crandall renewed his fight for liberty, but he stood no show now, and was quickly bundled into the car and the train started.

Matt paid the conductor the quarter which was the fare for Crandall to Darien, and with the help of the brakeman stood guard over the prisoner till he was hustled out on the Darien platform.

A policeman was summoned from the street and Crandall was marched to headquarters, accompanied by Matt.

CHAPTER XV.

MATT ASKS KITTIE THE ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION.

Crandall, before he was taken to a cell, sent word to his uncle to come and bail him out.

Matt, after leaving headquarters, went home to change his Sunday clothes for his working habiliments.

Mrs. Staples and Kittie greeted his appearance with satisfaction.

He quickly told his story, recounting with not a little exultation how he had finally succeeded in landing Crandall in jail.

As soon as Matt finished his story he hurried away to the shop where he had to repeat his night and morning's experiences to Mr. Staples, and later on, during the noon hour, he told the workmen who did not go out to lunch.

As Arthur Crandall was decidedly unpopular in the machine-shop, as well as all over the establishment, Matt's exploit met with general approval.

Crandall's uncle got him out on a thousand dollars bail, and after vowing that he would get square with Matt Warner, whom he tried in vain to get his uncle to discharge from the works, he took a late afternoon train for New York.

When he reached the Castle Square Hotel he was astonished and disgusted to learn that Brett and Otis had been arrested on a telegraph order from Darien, and taken to the Tombs.

Next morning he went to the Tombs to call on his associ-

ated, and found that they had voluntarily gone back to Darien on a late train the day previous, and he had probably passed them on the road.

As there was nothing to keep him in New York now, he returned himself to Darien and found Brett and Otis out on bail.

A month later the three were tried for the crime of attempted abduction, and were convicted, in spite of the efforts of Lawyer Otis in their behalf.

Crandall was sentenced to five years in the State prison, and Brett and Otis to one year each.

The fathers of Brett and Otis succeeded in getting the judge to suspend sentence in their behalf, and they were released.

Mr. Crandall appealed his nephew's case, and the young man got out on bail, pending the decision of the Appellate Court.

Matt, on Mr. Staples' advice, consulted the district attorney about the conversation he had overheard between Crandall and Hathaway at the haunted house, stating that as the former had sworn to get square with him, he feared some conspiracy might be hatched up against him between the two men, and put into effect by Hathaway.

"If they were to be arrested, nothing could be proved against them on your uncorroborated testimony. You ought to have taken advantage of your friend's presence at the house to have had him listen as well as yourself. As the case stands, all he would be able to swear to is the fact that the two men held an interview in the house that day. However, as I am satisfied you have told me nothing but the truth, I'll send for both Hathaway and young Crandall, tell them that I have evidence tending to show that they contemplated getting you out of the way, and I will warn them that if anything crooked happens to you they will be immediately arrested on suspicion of being implicated in the matter. That will no doubt bring them to their senses."

The district attorney carried out his purpose, and though both Hathaway and the secretary disavowed ever having had any intention of harming the young mechanic, the official gave them to understand that he didn't believe their denial, and warned them to mind their p's and q's.

They took the hint, and Joe was not molested by either after that.

Crandall eventually got a new trial on the ground that the evidence did not warrant the sentence he had received.

He was convicted again, and sentenced to three years this time.

His friends succeeded in influencing the judge to suspend sentence, and he was permitted to go free.

At the end of a year Brett and Otis got their sentences quashed, as nothing had been brought against them during that time.

In the meantime Matt Warner was rapidly becoming an expert mechanic.

Soon after his nineteenth birthday he passed his examination before a board of engineers and received a license as a stationary engineer.

Six months later he passed another examination and received a certificate similar to a diploma, which stated that in the opinion of the board he was qualified to run the highest grade of stationary engines, like the Corliss, and such types.

Matt, however, had no intention of availing himself of this advantage, as he meant to become a king-pin mechanic, and then grade himself up to some big job in that line, such as superintendent of a big shop employing hundreds of hands.

His general knowledge of engineering was bound to help him to reach the desired goal, and he kept improving himself in that line right along.

He had really no idea of ever running an engine for a living, but he wanted to understand the better class of engines so well that he could superintend taking one apart and putting it together again, down to the smallest detail.

He now considered himself fully qualified to tackle the problem of improving the condenser, though he was by no means sure that the dream of Parks could be realized.

Still the idea appealed to him, because it had been in his mind ever since the day Parks' model came into his possession.

About this time Kittie paid a visit to her aunt, who lived on a country farm.

Although she was having a good time there she missed Matt's society very much, and finally she asked her aunt if she could invite him out to stay over Sunday.

She got permission to do so, and sent a letter to Matt telling him that it would please her greatly if he would come to the farm on Saturday afternoon and remain until Monday morning.

Matt was delighted at the chance and accepted it, sending Kittie word that she could look for him the next Saturday.

With a hand-bag in his hand he started at the appointed time by the train, and got off at a small town called Green-lawn.

Here he found Kittie and her cousin, a boy of Matt's age, waiting for him in the light wagon.

"This is my cousin, Bob Storey," said Kittie, after she had given him an effusive greeting.

"Glad to know you, Storey," said Matt, as the boys shook hands.

The farm was three miles from town, but it did not take long for them to cover the distance.

On their arrival Matt was made acquainted with Farmer Storey and his wife, and they told him to make himself at home, which he proceeded to do.

Early next morning Matt returned to Darien.

He experimented only during a part of his spare time, and months went by before his scheming bore any encouraging fruit.

The friendship between Matt and Kittie, begun on the day he got his job at the machine-shop of the Crandall Works, kept on growing stronger and stronger as time elapsed.

Although Mr. and Mrs. Staples had often remarked that no man living was quite good enough for their daughter, still they marked the progress of Matt's quiet courtship with considerable satisfaction.

They looked upon Matt as a most unusual boy, and were prepared to make an exception in his favor.

Living right in the family, they had a line on the young mechanic all the time, and could not find the slightest fault with him.

Indeed, Mrs. Staples had come to think almost as much of Matt as though he were her own son, and she made no bones about saying as much, both to her husband and Kittie.

"On the whole, I wouldn't ask for a better husband for Kittie than Matt," remarked Mr. Staples one evening to his wife. "He possesses all the qualities I admire in a young man, and if he lives he will make a name and a competence for himself."

Mrs. Staples agreed with her husband, and they looked forward to their daughter's future without the slightest mis-giving.

One night Matt took Kittie to one of the theaters to see a New York success that had come to town for a week stand.

Love was the predominant feature of the play, and both Matt and Kittie were much impressed by the trials and tribulations of the virtuous hero in his efforts to win the beautiful but coy heroine.

When they came out after the show, they could talk of nothing else by the play, and instead of taking a car part of the way to their home, they walked.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and when they got into the quiet residential street Matt became more confidential than usual.

After going over his plans for the future, as he had already done many times before with the girl, he said:

"I suppose you intend to marry, some day, Kittie?"

"I suppose so, if I can find anybody to have me."

"Don't you know anybody who would be glad to have such a treasure as you are?"

"No-o," replied the girl, slowly, which was a big fib, for she knew, as well as any girl in her shoes could know, that Matt would propose some day to her, and that she meant to accept him.

"You don't know?" said the young mechanic, a trifle disappointed in her reply.

She shook her head and looked down, but her manner belied her words.

"Isn't there somebody you think a whole lot of?"

"Why, of course—mother and father."

"Isn't there somebody else?"

"Well, I think a lot of you, too," she replied, slowly.

"How much?"

"Oh, a lot."

"Do you think as much of me as I do of you?"

"I don't know how much you think of me."

"Oh, come now, you do."

"How much do you think of me?" she asked, almost scornfully.

"I think more of you than anybody else in the world. I think so much of you that I want you to be my wife some day. There, I've said it now. Will you?"

"Do you really mean that, Matt?"

"I do. Don't you believe me?"

"Yes, I believe anything you say."

"And may I ask your father and mother if I can have you?"

"Yes," she answered, softly.

"Then you love me as I love you?"

"I do, with all my heart."

Matt's heart jumped with delight.

She loved him and he was thoroughly happy.

And so was Kittie happy, for Matt had declared himself at last.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAKING HIS PILE.

A few days later Matt summoned up courage enough to ask Mr. Staples the important question—can he have Kittie?

"So you want to marry our Kittie, eh?"

"I do, the worst way."

"Well, you go and ask Mrs. Staples, Matt. Whatever she says goes."

So the young mechanic hunted Kittie's mother up and told her that he wanted Kittie.

"Have you asked Mr. Staples?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"Told me to ask you. That whatever you said went."

"Well, Matt, Kittie is our only child and our father and I think there isn't another girl in the world like her."

"That's right," nodded the boy. "I think the same."

"Naturally, we're particular about the person she marries as a husband."

"Well, how do I fill the bill?" asked Matt, a bit anxiously.

"I don't know anybody I would sooner give her to than you, Matt. So you can have her with our blessing, for I know you will make her a good husband."

In a few days Mrs. Staples took Kittie to a jewelry store, and she picked out an engagement ring, the price of which came within his means.

A few days later Matt, while making an experiment in connection with his first and important improvement in the condenser, suddenly realized that he had accidentally found out a way to utilize a larger percentage of the wasted steam than was known in use anywhere.

It was a fact that by far the greater proportion of the units of steam used to drive machinery are lost by any discovery which would serve to utilize a larger amount of those particles of condensed vapor would prove a most valuable in economizing coal consumption.

Matt knew the value of his new discovery, and he lost no time in assuring himself that it could be put to practical use.

He got permission from the manager of the works to attach his invention to the big boiler in the engine-house adjoining the engine-room.

Careful data was kept of the results achieved, and it was found that the boy's apparatus enabled the boiler to supply the usual amount of steam necessary to run the engine at regulation speed with one-third less fuel than was required when his attachment was not in use.

As soon as this fact was demonstrated beyond a doubt, Matt had drawings made of his invention, and applied for a patent.

Owing to the great importance it was placed by the patent attorneys, and a patent secured at the earliest possible date.

A full illustrated description of this valuable discovery was immediately published by a well-known scientific paper, published in New York.

Inside of a few days letters began coming to Matt from people who were desirous of securing an interest in his invention.

Mr. Staples, who had made up his mind that his property in son-in-law had made one of the most important discoveries of the age, advised Matt to go slow about disposing of any share of his invention.

Before the boy had considered seriously any of the propositions submitted to him, he was called upon by the representative of a manufacturing establishment of national reputation located near Pittsburg.

The firm in question wanted to secure the exclusive rights to manufacture and put Matt's invention on the market, and its representative was authorized to offer the young mechanic a royalty that was bound to make him rich in a short time.

Matt's attorneys had made arrangements to take out patents in every civilized country on the face of the globe, so that the boy should secure the exclusive rights of his valuable invention.

The demand for the invention was so large that only an establish-

ment like the Pittsburg house could hope to supply the demand within anything like a reasonable time after the invention was actually put on the market.

Owing to the fact that Matt's invention had first demonstrated its usefulness and value on the boiler of his establishment, Mr. Crandall took a great deal of interest in the boy's success.

When he heard about the offer submitted by the Pittsburg firm, he called the young mechanic into his office and advised him by all means to accept it, as the responsibility and reputation of the house were a sufficient guarantee that he would be fairly dealt with, while the resources of the establishment were such that the invention could not only be rapidly turned out, but quickly marketed.

"Had this firm made you a flat offer of a million for your American patent alone, I should have advised you to refuse it, for the royalty basis offers you far larger returns. When you have secured your foreign patents I should advise you to hold on to them also, and let the Pittsburg house supply the world. You will not only add to your own income by so doing, but help American trade and the American workman," said Mr. Crandall.

"I will follow your advice, Mr. Crandall," replied Matt, "and at the same time I thank you for the interest you show in me."

"You are welcome, Warner. And to show you that this interest is no sham, I will, if you so desire, make it my business to see that you get every advantage in the agreement you have decided to make with the Pittsburg house."

The unexpected results which had come to Matt through his experience with Parks' diaphragm idea of an absolute vacuum in the condenser, changed the whole course of the boy's future.

After signing the documents with the Pittsburg company, there no longer existed any reason for him doing another stroke of manual labor during the rest of his life.

Inside of the year, while his invention was coming into general use as fast as the great resources of the Pittsburg concern could put it out, his name became known in every important country of the world.

When the young mechanic asked Kittie to make the day for their marriage, her mother, whom she consulted, said to her:

"Kittie, you have won a prize in the matrimonial lottery. You will ultimately be able to live in the finest home in this town, whether it be in Broadway, avenue or anywhere else. You will be able to buy the most expensive gowns your heart can wish for. In fact, you will be able to command all the luxuries that a millionaire husband can give you. You were certainly born under a lucky star."

Three months later Matt and Kittie were married, and every newspaper in town considered the event of sufficient general interest to lay it before its readers.

At the conclusion of their honeymoon, Matt and his bride took possession of the new home he had had built and furnished for their accommodation.

At his particular request, Mr. and Mrs. Staples went to live with them, his father-in-law retiring from the front of the business, and becoming a gentleman of leisure, while his long years of service justly entitled him to.

A time passed, Matt's wealth rapidly increased, and it was not long before he was in a financial position to sign his check for a million had he wanted to do so.

Todday Matt Warner's name figures in every up-to-date encyclopedia in connection with steam and engineering, and were a special tribute of fame provided for Matt, the inventor of the modern steam engine, as well as the condenser, which forms the foundation of his great reputation, and his successors who improved and added to his discoveries, Matt would surely find a very important niche in it.

Reader, there is more truth in this story than you probably imagine, for Matt Warner is a real personage, though the name herewith assigned to him is fictitious for reasons unnecessary to explain.

He is now one of our multi-millionaires, and a man of years, but he is just as modest, just as upright, and just as vigorous as he was when only a young mechanic.

Next week's issue will contain "AMONG THE ICE PEAKS; OR, THE VOYAGE THAT MADE THE MONEY."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

Dr. Edward H. Morrison, of Los Angeles, Cal., whose sudden blindness seven years ago forced him to abandon medicine and practice osteopathy, has passed the state day law examination. He has been reading law for fifteen months in spare time by means of hired readers, sometimes using as many as three on holidays, working in relays.

R. A. Holmes, a traveling salesman of King City, Mo., has a small flock of poultry which he holds the season's record for laying eggs. At his home in the west part of town Holmes has thirteen Rhode Island red hens that have laid 990 eggs in the five months from March 1 to August 1. In addition to the laying, four of the hens have set and raised broods of chickens.

While washing dishes in a camp on the government river near Lone Bluff, on the Klamath River, thirty miles above Dawson, a few days ago, George Ameraux looked over his shoulder. Grinning at him was a four-foot bear. Ameraux threw a pan full of dish water at the animal. While Bruin was trying to rub the soap from his eyes Ameraux rushed to his tent, returned with his rifle and killed the bear.

New York Stock Exchange governors vehemently denied reports that members are seeking to sell their seats at low prices. A governor said: "The report is absolutely without foundation. There is no present or other any of our members which would make such a move necessary." The seat of William G. Streit has been posted for transfer to D. W. Dilworth at \$42,000, the same as the last sale, and \$5,000 above the record low price of June, 1913.

A wedding in a wedding dress saved the wedding breakfast of Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Manne, of Sacramento, Cal., from being a failure. When the wedding party sat down to the breakfast the absence of the bride and groom was noted. The bride had been married at the house and all the guests were unwilling to miss the fun. Then one of the party thought of the baby next door. The mother's consent was obtained and the ceremony was performed in the baby's room. The bride and groom were seated at the head of the table and the wedding breakfast was a success.

A half-breed, who was a member of a snake-pronged pitchfork left Hoca Long of Orange Township, Connersville, Ind., in a class by himself among local snake hunters. He slithered the writhing snakes, which were as big as a man's arm, and when he was put to flight by a bull-snake which started to climb the pitchfork handle. He returned with another fork and killed it and others, which, like it, had been caught by the prongs. The largest snake was five feet long and as thick as a man's arm. He was a member of the Snake and Pitchfork Club.

Almost six years were consumed in the transit of a postcard mailed in Western Australia and received by Mrs. Thomas McCue of Summit, N. J., August 22. The card was postmarked "Adelaide, Western Australia, September 4, 1903." Where the delay occurred is not known and Albany is the only postmark. It is believed the card may have been overlooked in some hook or corner of an Australian post office. The souvenir was sent to Mrs. McCue by her son, Charles A. McCue, who went around the world with the American fleet six years ago. The card's fulfillment expired two years ago and he has been living at his home here since.

It will be a surprise to most people to learn that there has actually been a woman executioner in this country. In olden times few cared to undertake the office of executioner, and executioners were sentenced to death on condition that they should perform this office. A case of this sort occurred in prerevolutionary days, when a woman was sentenced to death for a murder she had committed in Virginia. The death sentence was respited on her offering to become public executioner, and, known as Lady Mary, she performed these duties for many years. She officiated on the scaffold without any mask or disguise and flogged criminals through the streets with vigor.

Russian enthusiasm for the war is growing constantly. Not since 1812, when Moscow was sacked by Napoleon, were the Russians as unanimous in their determination to support their country's cause by all possible means as they are now. The present war is declared to be a holy war and private persons, corporations, the nobility and the clergy are subscribing large sums for the wounded and distressed. This is true not only of the capitals, but of the provinces. One of the most striking examples of this national unity is the decision of the nobility in several places to work the fields for the peasants called to the war. This example is likely to be widely followed. The people of all parties are coming together and forgetting their differences. Jews are working with the Russians.

Fulton County, Ky., is larger by about 800 or 900 acres of land, now having been instituted for the ownership of 100 acres of land each in New Madrid Bend, the lower end of this county, by James R. Adams and James F. Adams. According to the survey they are seeking for the land because it has never been claimed or occupied by any one. The whole tract is about 800 or 900 acres and represents the bottom lands drained by the Mississippi River in that part of the county. It is a very fertile and valuable piece of land. The island at present is mostly composed of sand, but in time will become very fertile and valuable, fine pasture land. The estimated timber now on the land is worth a large amount of money. The court ordered a survey made by James R. Adams and James F. Adams and he has filed map and report of the survey with the court.

THE SILVER WHEEL

— OR —

THE LIGHTNING LEAGUE OF LYNN

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XVI (continued).

"Look at that heap," cried Ned, pointing to the remnant of the heap of fuel with which Phil Green and Leslie Ware had started the fire. "How did it come there?"

"It didn't walk there, by gracious! Then this wasn't an accident after all. It must have been a deliberate attempt to kill us. Yes, yes, that's so," cried Jack, excitedly. "Look! You can see footprints on the ground, and they're not ours."

"And the track of two wheels," said Ned, "showing plainly in this sand. Green and Ware at work again, beyond a doubt."

"We may as well get on our way," said Jack. "Talking about what's happened won't do us any good, and I'm so wide-awake now that it's useless for me to try to get any more sleep."

"We'll hustle, and perhaps we may overtake Green and Ware. If we do, I'll give them some pretty plain talk."

"You'd better hold your tongue. You've got no proof against either of them, Ned."

As it happened the day passed without anything being seen of either of the rival wheelmen. The two boys had a good sleep, and in the morning, very early, they continued their journey.

Towards the evening of the second day they crossed the State line into Colorado, and decided to halt for the night at Arapahoe, where there was a station on the Union Pacific Railroad.

"Then ye're not dead!" cried a familiar voice. "It's yerselves ridin' the wheels."

"I guess it is, Larry," said Jack, laughingly. "Where's Joe, and he seems to be excited. Where's the trouble?"

"We were afraid that you'd met with a very bad accident. News was brought here that two wheelmen had fallen into the gulch going through the hills near Deer Trail," said Joe. "It was supposed they were killed. My sister and Sally have gone over there, and a short walk they will find it, too. I couldn't go with them, as I had to stay here."

"But why didn't Larry go with them?" asked Jack, seriously.

"That, as it's only this blessed minute, Masther Jack, the trouble put me down here."

"We ought to go over," said Ned. "The girls may need assistance."

"Why, you don't think they are in any danger, do you?" cried Joe, in some alarm.

"No," answered Ned. "But it's evident an accident of some kind has happened, and they'll need some one to help them with the injured men. I quite expect that the two unfortunate wheelmen are Ware and Green."

"Begorra, I hope so!" cried Larry.

"That's not very Christian, Larry."

"An' is it Christian ye want me to be when I'm thinkin' of them two murderin' young scoundrels? I'm not!"

"That will do, Larry," interposed Jack. "When we have some time we'll stay and listen to your opinion of our two friends, Ware and Green. Just now we are in a hurry. You stay here, Larry, unless you can get a rig and drive out to Deer Trail. Ned and I will be there on our wheels very quickly."

"Betther take a carriage, Masther Jack," said Larry, "to bring back the corpses."

"Do as you like," cried Jack, springing on his wheel and riding off. "Well, what do you think of this, Ned?"

"I think, Jack, that Ware and Green have about finished their careers, though I'm sorry they should have had such a miserable end."

"I'm not," said Jack. "I share Larry's sentiments on the subject. So long as they're gone I'm content. They were a precious pair of scoundrels."

The boys had been directed how to travel in order to reach the scene of the accident, and they had been told that if they lost their way there was more than one hut to be found at which they might make inquiries.

They went to the first they struck and asked of an old woman there where Deer Trail was. She pointed out the road, but in reply to further questions she said she had heard nothing of two wheelmen having met with a bad accident.

"That doesn't amount to anything, though," said Jack. "How should she know? I don't suppose she stirs out of her house all day, and sees no one. We shall soon meet some one who can tell us all about it, for we can't be far away."

They hurried on, looking around everywhere.

"There's a man in that cornfield!" exclaimed Ned. "Hello, there!"

The man turned, hearing them shout, and came towards the two boys.

"Have you heard of an accident to two wheelmen?" asked Ned.

"Reckon I haven't heard of anybody bein' killed, but I saw two cusses on wheels pass 'long this morning."

"Are we near Deer Trail?" said Jack.

"Cross that hill an' you'll be thar."

Down they went at racing pace, and working hard they reached the opposite bluff without stopping. Down in the hollow below they saw a few houses clustered together, and this, from what had been told them, they imagined was Deer Trail.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LETTER FROM WINNIE KING—GETTING EVEN WITH WARE AND GREEN.

"Look! Look!" cried Jack, suddenly. "There's a piece of paper stuck on the trunk of that tree."

"I saw it," answered Ned, which indeed was true, for he was already off his wheel, rushing across the road towards it.

Jack dismounted, too, and hurried after him.

Ned took the piece of paper which had been nailed to the tree and read its contents, giving a loud cry of astonishment as he did so, and dropping the paper on the ground.

Jack, surprised, ran eagerly forward and picked it up.

"Why, it's from Winnie," he cried in amazement, reading it carefully. "We're in great danger, captured by men who have taken us to a place called Beaver Creek."

This is what he read, and it may be imagined he was considerably alarmed.

"What's to be done?" cried Jack.

"We must follow instantly," said Ned. "It may mean losing the Silver Wheel, but I can't help that. Our first duty is to rescue the girls."

"We don't know where Beaver Creek is."

"But we have tongues in our heads," said Ned, impatiently. "Can't we inquire?"

"Sure. We'll go back and ask that man."

"There's no need to do so when we have the houses in front of us. Come on."

Down they went, stopping at the first house they reached, and learning in reply to a question that Beaver Creek was fully fifteen miles away. Their informant could tell them nothing of the girls, not having seen anything of them.

The boys wasted no time now, dashing off towards Beaver Creek at full speed, only slowing down when the road was bad.

They had gone about five miles when they saw a carriage coming along towards them at a great pace, and the man who was in it was waving his hand to them.

"Why, it's Larry!" cried Ned.

"Gracious! so it is. Hello, Larry, what's happened now?"

"Faith, it's nothin' happened just now, but about an hour since the two young ladies came into Arapahoe."

"Are they all right?"

"Shure. Masther Jack, and why wouldn't they be, but I guess it's the nice tempers they had, too. They were clane mad. 'Twas a fool's errand they had been on, for no one was hurt after all."

"Then we're only been wasting our time, Larry."

"Just the same, Jack, darlin', an' that spalpeen Mither Ware has gained on ye. Och! it's hard ye must ride now."

"You bet we will. Come on, Jack," cried Ned. "Once more we've fallen into a trap, but we'll get through right enough yet."

"He works these things very cleverly," said Ned, as they were riding on, "or else we're dead easy."

Jack made no reply. He was too mad to speak, and was busy thinking out a way by which he might get square with Green and Ware.

It was pitch dark now, and more than once they fell off their machines. Jack ran heavily against a fence, and scratched himself badly, and altogether their journey was unpleasant. They were tired, too, and there seemed to be no prospect of getting a bed.

"There's a light across the way," said Ned, "and so there must be a house of some kind there. I should think the people would allow us to stay there for the night."

"Guess they will. Anyway we'll see. Let's go right over."

"Look! there are two lights against the house, bicycle lamps, I believe. It must be our two enemies."

"Then we'll go slow," said Jack. "The best thing we can do is to get over there and find out what's going on, and I propose that we leave our wheels here. We can hide them in these bushes."

"That's a good plan," assented Ned, and, having done as suggested, they made their way on foot to the house.

Getting near they found their suspicions were confirmed, for there were two wheels leaning up against the side of the house. Peeping in at a window they saw Ware and Green talking to three ruffianly-looking men, and as one of the panes of glass in the window was broken they were able to hear all that was said.

"And yer goin' ter give us ten dollars apiece for the job, boss?"

"That's what I offer you, and I think it's quite enough, too," said Ware, "considering that you don't run any risk and that the whole business won't occupy five minutes."

"I'm not kickin', boss," answered the man; "ten bones suits me, an' I reckon my pard's is satisfied."

"Bet we are," the other two men growled.

"Then let's hev a drink on it. Fill up, boss, it's not pis'n, it's corn juice."

"I never drink whisky," said Ware, curtly. "Neither does my friend. Now, here's the money," he added, producing a roll of bills and handing each man two of five dollars apiece.

"Guess that's right," said Green. "Now, do you understand what you have to do?"

"I'm not a jay, boss. You've told me, an' of course I know."

"Well, you've to wait till you hear two wheelmen coming, and it won't be many minutes, either, before they'll be along. You're to throw them off their wheels and damage their machines. Not a regular smash-up, mind, but just enough hurt to keep them back for eight or ten hours for repairs."

(To be continued.)

FACTS WORTH READING

PROFIT IN CATCHING AND SELLING SNAKES.

There is an active market in St. Louis for live snakes, rather snakes preferred. G. H. Marshall, a lithographer, and H. F. Brennan, a wholesale furniture dealer of Knoxville, Tenn., have a lucrative business in catching and selling poisonous reptiles in this State.

"You slip up quietly on a snake," says Marshall, "and grab it just back of the head. Then you squeeze it into insensibility and throw it into a sack. You should then have no more trouble with the snake."

"No, I don't expect ever to be bitten by a snake; I am too careful for that. But even if I did, there are antidotes for the poison."

See Lee, a Chinese, buys all their catch. He cuts up the snakes, places the parts in alcohol and ships them to China, where they are converted into a medicine that is said to be a sure cure for rheumatism.

WIFE'S PLACE IN JAPAN.

One of the proverbial Japanese expressions characterizing the Island Empire is that it is "the land where the day would not dawn without the tender sex." This is a plain admission of woman's mighty influence, and refers indirectly to a mythological story of the sun goddess from whom the imperial family is supposed to have sprung. In Japan in early times the wife seems to have had her full share of the respect of the husband, says the Arengo Journal. Instead of "taking her to wife" the earliest Japanese word for marriage means "the union of the man and woman." The woman, after her marriage, continued to live with her parents and her husband visited her daily. As soon as his means permitted he built a new house and the wife came to live in it with him. Even to this day the word shinzo, "newly built," means wife; that is, the woman who occupies the domicile, especially erected for her comfort. In the civil ceremony of marriage, in which the sipping of rice wine is the prominent feature, the bride drinks first, the cup then being passed to the bridegroom.

BASEBALL "FAILURES" THAT HAVE MADE GOOD.

In the last few years more than one baseball player thrust back into the bushes without even an option on his future, has been recalled and returned to the field, and some of them who failed to see his good points when he left the club, or the manager has been ready to back him as a great baseball joke.

John Dahlen of the Senators, who last year was thrown out of the game to-day, was thrown overboard by the Naps, and even the Street Circuit Manager (1907) was thrown out of the game by Joe Jackson's club swinging. Harry Davis and Dan Murphy were thrown out of the Giants and then went to Philadelphia and assisted in making the Athletics

world famous. John Dahlen and Otto Stange were cast into the discard by the Reds only to turn up later as stars. Helme Weller, for a long time the American League's clearest short fielder, was cast aside by the New York Nationals, and after being returned to the fall grass Dick Reddy of the Braves and Phil of the Cubs fought their way back among the featured men in the majors.

Bill Killefer of the Giants and Bob Bisher and Joe Tesreau of the Giants went to the National organization and made good after they had been forced to walk the plank in the American League.

PEANUT FARMS BIG MONEY MAKERS.

Although the effect of peanuts has been delayed to some extent by the heavy rains, the reports that are received from many sections of Oklahoma where peanuts are being grown are highly encouraging, and it is expected that the total yield this year will be greater than that of last year by half.

The soil throughout the State is in such excellent condition that there will be a great amount of late planting, which will make splendid yields; and in sections of the State where cotton and other crops have been seriously damaged by the heavy rains, and where replanting of those crops is likely to prove a losing venture, it has been suggested that peanuts be planted, as they will thrive in weather conditions that would prove detrimental to other crops.

To encourage the late planting of peanuts the price of seed peanuts on the local market has been reduced from \$2.50 for a bushel of 80 pounds to \$1.80. There are plenty of good seed peanuts available on the local market, and peanuts can be planted any time, with the assurance of a good yield.

For the last ten years the average has been from 35 to 40 bushels per acre and in some sections there has been a yield of 100 bushels per acre. Not only is peanuts one of the safest crops that can be planted in the State, but it carries a great advantage of being one of the surest feed crops, as over a ton of peanut hay can be realized from an acre of peanuts, and this hay has the same value as alfalfa for feed, according to enthusiasts of the crop.

The food value of Oklahoma grown peanuts is much greater than those grown in other parts of the country owing to the soil being adapted for the culture of peanuts, and the excellent climatic conditions.

There can be found in Oklahoma City a market for very best of peanuts raised in the State, and last summer manufacturers of peanut products were compelled to go outside of the State to obtain a supply of peanuts sufficient to keep factories in operation.

The price paid last year for good quality peanuts averaged \$1 per bushel, and it is reasonably safe to expect a price of from 90 cents to \$1.10 per bushel this fall, with a market for the entire yield in Oklahoma City.

The Fight for the Pirate's Isle

— OR —

CAPTAIN DIABLO'S LAST CRUISE

By ED. KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER III (continued).

The suspense was terrible.

Meanwhile, with the sailors formed in a ring around them, Dick Decker and Lieut. Morton fought amidst a silence as of death, which was only broken by the flashing blades as they met each other.

The men were too deeply interested in the extraordinary combat they were witnessing to interrupt it by a word.

The two men fought on, each warily endeavoring to ascertain the other's whereabouts by moving his blade up his opponent's toward the hilt, and then launching a terrific blow. Up to now they had merely beaten the air.

For neither man was touched. But this could not last long. For if the suspense to the bystanders was extreme, what was it to the two men who were fighting?

Dick felt, at whatever hazard, he must end this desperate struggle.

Frantically, he waved his cutlas in the air, whirling it round savagely.

Once the British lieutenant was touched on the shoulder.

This irritated him, and he too commenced to follow his opponent's tactics.

At this instant the Dauntless began to heel over on the side farthest from the Albatross. Then amidst the clanging of steel was heard the cry, "The ship's sinking."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SINKING OF THE SHIP.

At the very moment that Dick Decker had heard the shout, "The ship's sinking!" he swung his cutlas in the air.

The blade descended with terrible force on the skull of the English lieutenant.

He dropped heavily on the deck.

Instantly Dick Decker pulled the bandage from his eyes and looked around.

All was noise and confusion.

The Dauntless was filling fast.

Part of the stern was even now below the water, and the ship was rapidly claiming another victim.

Ben Barnacle, who was on the schooner, had pushed her away from the sinking ship; fearing that the great suction would draw down the Albatross.

In less time than it takes to tell the story, the Dauntless sank beneath the waves.

In a moment the sea was a mass of human beings, struggling to escape from a watery grave.

The dead and the living, the wounded and the strong men were in one vast crowd.

The shrieks of the drowning men added to the horror of the scene.

But as if this was not enough, the terrible destroyer of the deep, the hideous shark with his devouring maw, dashed higher and thither after his prey.

As a struggling sailor would disappear from view, blood reddened the green water.

Dick struck out desperately for the schooner.

His opponent had without doubt sunk to the bottom.

For the frightful blow he had received, even if it had not killed him on the spot, at any rate had rendered him absolutely helpless.

Some of the men were keeping themselves afloat by clinging to pieces of wreckage that were floating around.

Twice Dick felt it was all over with him.

Once a drowning man seized him with the energy of despair and nearly dragged him to the bottom. It was by a desperate effort only that he eluded this embrace of death.

Then he saw a gigantic shark making straight toward him.

His limbs seemed to become paralyzed.

However, the voracious monster seized some nearer prey, and Dick was safe for the time.

Then as he was sinking, exhausted, he felt himself clutched by the neck and dragged into a boat.

In a few minutes he stood once more on the deck of the Albatross with Claire in his arms.

"Safe!" she murmured. "Oh, Dick, what an escape you've had!" The suspense nearly killed me."

"Well, it's all right now, little woman; but I was foolish to bring you with me."

"No, no, Dick!"

He kissed her and said:

"Go down to the cabin; I must look after the ship; then I'll come and see you."

By this time all the men who had been in the water were either taken out or had sunk to the bottom.

Out of the entire ship's company only six stood alive on the deck of the Albatross.

Ben Barnacle had promptly lowered the boats, and

many owed their lives to his ready action. Dick amongst the number.

The crew of the Dauntless had suffered most.

The privateer had lost comparatively few, as many of the men who were on the brig had gone back to their own ship before the disaster.

The survivors of the Dauntless were six fine-looking fellows. What was to be done with them was the question.

"Harry, that was a narrow escape."

"Yes, wonder how it happened?"

"Guess some of our shots pierced her hull."

"Very likely. By the way, what's become of the lieutenant?"

"Oh, he's gone to the bottom."

"The best place for him, Dick. He was a mean sort of a creature."

"You're right. But these men of his look honest, sturdy fellows. What shall we do with them?"

"Why, we must keep them prisoners until we fall in with an American ship."

"Yes, looks like it. Stay, I've an idea."

"What is it?"

"Why not ask them to join us? The ship's company wants filling up a bit."

"There's no harm, Dick, in making them the offer."

Dick Decker did not hesitate a moment.

"My lads," he said, addressing the six survivors of the Dauntless, "I have a proposition to make to you. I want some good sailors, I dare say you want good pay. What d'you say to serving under me?"

A middle-aged weather-beaten English sailor stepped forward.

"Maybe, cap'n, you'll tell us first what your business it."

"That's only my name. This is an American privateer, fitted out to attack the enemies of the Stars and Stripes, but principally to attack the Pirates' Isle."

"The Pirates' Isle?"

"Yes. I've sworn to capture Captain Diablo the Sea Devil, and destroy his nest of cutthroats, and nothing but death will stop me."

"My eye, cap'n," said the English sailor, "I like your style. I'm with you through thick and thin, there's my hand."

Dick Decker and the man who had been fighting hard against him at the capture of the Dauntless were now

"What d'you say, lads?" said the sailor, turning to his mates.

"By all means with you," they shouted.

The compact was complete, and Dick felt he had gained six valuable recruits.

The men went off to their work, and Bill Bluff, the spokesman of the party, soon struck up a close acquaintance with Ben Barnacle.

They found they were in a bad way for repairs and provisions, and it was decided to go down to one of the two small islands in the neighbourhood of the latter article.

The Albatross was soon on her feet again and resumed her course, while Tom Plate, the carpenter, and his men were hard at work mending good the damage caused by the shots from the Dauntless.

For several days the ship ran on before a fair wind, and nothing noteworthy occurred.

All this time the most careful watch was kept.

For the Albatross was rapidly approaching Captain Diablo's cruising grounds.

In fact, the Isle of Delight, which was his headquarters, was within easy sail.

"Ben," said Dick Decker to the old boat-waiter, "we must look out for squalls."

"Ay, ay, cap'n, ye can never tell in these seas when you're going to get some weather."

"Oh! I don't mean the weather."

"No?"

"Oh! no. Our little craft will stand any wind that blows. I mean we shall surely fall in with the pirate before long."

"It's likely, but he don't know us. He's never seen the ship before."

"That's true, and we may be able to give him a surprise."

"Anyway we'll try."

"I'm going below. Tell the men to keep an extra sharp lookout during the night. So much depends on it."

It was already getting dark as Dick Decker went down the companion-ladder.

CHAPTER V.

THE ALBATROSS ENCOUNTERS A STRANGE SAIL.

Towards evening on the next day the lookout man reported a strange sail.

Dick and Harry, being on duty, started and ran along through their glasses.

At first but little could be seen of it.

But as it was evident that the ship, which was on their weather bow, was crossing the track of the Albatross it could be easily made out to be a brig.

"A brig," said Dick, "and a fast sailer, too," he added.

"Yes. How she cuts through the water. By heaven! she's a beauty."

"Still I reckon we'd outsail her."

Ben Barnacle, who had also been keenly interested in the movements of the unknown brig, approached.

"Squalls is pretty near," he said.

"Eh? What d'you mean, Ben?"

"Why, didn't you say yesterday we must look out for squalls now?"

"Well?"

"Here's one of 'em anyway."

"Still I don't understand you."

"Guess I'll talk straight this time. See that brig?"

"Yes."

"That's the 'Rattlesnake.' Is that plain enough, cap'n?"

"You don't mean it?"

"I'm sure of it. I'd bet my life on it."

"Well, so much the better. No running away for me. If he means fight he shall get his fill of it."

(To be continued.)

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FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher

168 West 23d Street

New York

Mrs. Mary Bunc, 1014 Tenth street, Port Huron, Mich., is a happy woman. For years she has been practically blind, but recently she underwent an operation, and to-day she recognizes her old friends and can see as well as she could a few years ago. She visited the park and watched the boats race up and down the river, reading the names plainly.

Chief Forest Ranger Hugh Mendenhall, in charge of the Upper Clackamas division, reports that a boy about fifteen years old has been wandering around in the mountains, signing the different ranger stations and sheep camps. The boy refuses to give his name or any information as to his home, and his clothing is rags from shoes to coat. When last seen, near the Oak Grove ranger station, he was coming up the trail toward Black Wolf Meadows. The child's identity is a mystery.

Coins and ornaments to the number of about 500 have been found in the village of Torrey, in South Dakota. While the director of the Copenhagen museum believes that they are from the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth. Some of them are Anglo-Saxon, though most of them bear Arabic inscriptions, and as there was no burial ground found near them the supposition is that the treasures were buried in time of war. Besides coins there was jewelry of gold and silver and also a silver dagger with an attached chain.

Mrs. George Ellery, wife of a trapper, whose cabin is near Unionville, Nev., saved her own life and that of her three-year-old child by killing a big mountain lioness with a blow from a rifle after the animal, wounded, had charged her. Ellery trapped some horses. The lioness followed them and charged her and her child. She called him to her. Mrs. Ellery saw the lioness reaching for the child and called the baby, playing outside. Then she reached for a rifle. She took one shot at the lioness, but only wounded it. The animal then rushed at the woman. Mrs. Ellery stopped back to give her a shot with the rifle and killed her. She then ran to the head of the lioness, killing it.

The death is reported of Albert Mills, known as "the little man of Birmingham." For twenty-six years Mills had suffered from an obscure disease which caused a shrinkage of bodily stature and made him the object of study by medical men from all over the world. Mills was twenty-six years of age. The disease was diagnosed as osteomalacia, and its chief symptom is the disappearance of the bone from the body, leaving the bones soft and misshapen. It became impossible for him to move, and for over fourteen years he had been confined to his bed. Before his illness he was five feet eight inches in height, but he gradually shrank until at the time of his death he was under four feet high, having lost twenty inches in twenty-six years.

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BRIEF BUT POINTED ITEMS

Armored vessels of war had an earlier origin than is generally supposed. The Knights of St. John of Jerusalem built in 1530 a war galley, the Santa Anna, which was protected with a cuirass of lead, to its great advantage in sea fights. The Santa Anna had another modern feature; a contemporary chronicler narrates with pleased astonishment that the vessel carried a bakery, which permitted the crew to enjoy the luxury of fresh bread.

A fierce battle with a wildcat, in which they came off victorious, ended a deer hunt for William Ritchie and Anthony Bocci, local sportsmen. The men were hunting in Lucas Valley, Cal., when Ritchie sighted and fired at a buck. Stepping around a clump of chaparral, he was attacked by the monster cat. Bocci, several yards distant, heard the sounds of the battle and rushed to his friend's assistance. Bocci clubbed his rifle and struck the cat over the head as it leaped for Ritchie's breast. The two men returned with the pelt of the animal.

There is distinct disappointment in Naval Academy circles over the fact that Oliphant, the star halfback of the Purdue University football team last season, who was expected to become a midshipman this spring, and who would have been a great addition to the navy squad, so greatly depleted by the graduation of the last class, changed his mind and entered the Military Academy. There is corresponding elation at West Point, though the army lads are in much better shape on account of the few losses sustained from last year's victorious team.

In both India and China there are thousands of people who manufacture india ink as a side line to their regular business, working at it in the winter at night and on days when they are not otherwise employed. It is made by burning some kind of oil in a lamp with a very long chimney, usually made in joints which can be taken apart for greater convenience in cleaning out the soot which makes the ink. Almost any kind of vegetable oil will answer, and in districts where petroleum is found even coal oil is used in making the cheaper grades. The best kind is made from sesame oil.

When fire destroyed the large boarding house of Andrew Jacobson at Ironwood, Erick Lapin, a roomer, watched the flames with consternation and sorrow that he had not banked his savings. He had \$515 in paper money in his trunk, with \$40 in gold. Shortage of water prevented the fire department saving the building, and when the blaze had burned itself out Lapin searched the ruins. He found that the trunk and its contents had been consumed, all but a Bible, in between the leaves of which he had stored the currency. The money was intact. The book was big and heavy and had preserved the currency from destruction.

JOKES AND JESTS.

"Have you heard the latest?" No, what is it?" "No American girl will sing a song that does not have a title."

"Why are you crying, dear?" "Oh, mother; last night I showed Henry the hammock that we first courted in." "What did he do?" "He went over and kicked it."

Mother—Johnny, I am ashamed of you! What did you mean by laughing and giggling at your dear uncle's funeral? Johnny—Gee! I was so glad it wasn't my own."

Mamma—Don't be so selfish. Let your baby brother play with your marbles a little while. Tommy—But he means to keep them always. Mamma—Oh, I guess not. Tommy—I guess yes, 'cause he's swallowed 'em.

Guest—Here's a quarter for you, waiter. Now tell me what you can conscientiously recommend for my dinner. Waiter—Thankee, boss. Ef yo' wants somefin fit ter eat Ah'd recermend dat yo' hunt another rest'rant, sah.

Silas Hayseed, at City Hotel—Mandy, look at that 'ere sign. "Ring twicet fer hot water!" Mandy Hayseed—Well, what of it, Si? Silas—Don't them darn fools downstairs know when yer ring fer it oncet that yer want it?

Miss Gabble—It's strange that a girl who used to wear her hair so neatly is so careless about it now. She has to keep brushing stray locks back with her hand. Miss Chellus—That's not strange. She's got an engagement ring.

Boss—Why, we'd be very glad to give you a job, but I don't know where we could put you. All the clerkships are filled. Applicant—Ah, couldn't you take me in as—er—partner, y'know? I've been told that there's always plenty of room at the top.

Towne—My wife used to get nervous every time she heard a noise downstairs, but I assured her that it could not be burglars, because they're always careful not to make any noise. Browne—So that calmed her, eh? Towne—Not much. Now she gets nervous every time she doesn't hear any noise.

SAVED AT THE LAST MINUTE.

By Paul Braddon.

"Yes, the case certainly has a very ugly aspect for the prisoner, but for all that I am not ready to believe him guilty."

The speaker was my old gray-haired friend, Pierre Record, the taxidermist, well known in the city of Paris.

We had been discussing a late murder of uncommon atrocity.

The man in custody for the crime had been surrounded with a network of evidence, which, although only circumstantial, was too strong for him to escape from.

Although he still earnestly protested his innocence, no one ventured to believe him, except my old friend and taxidermist, who had taken a strange interest in his behalf.

"No, no, Frank," said he, earnestly, "I have myself passed through too terrible an ordeal to judge hastily. Let me narrate to you what once happened to myself in my youth, and then judge for yourself:

I was only twenty-three years of age when I left my home in Alsace to seek my fortune in gay Paris.

It was my purpose to set up in my profession as taxidermist, and to this end had managed to hoard up a few francs.

I was even then quite proficient in the art, for I had been well instructed by an old man in my native place.

At his death he left me some choice specimens of his art, and with these securely packed away, I started on my journey.

Paris was fully two weeks' travel from my native village, and seeing a favorable opportunity, I bought a small horse for a trifling sum, and set out on horseback.

On the third day I fell in with a genial companion, a watchmaker by profession, who was bound for the same destination.

It was not long before we were as well acquainted as if we had known each other for years.

The man was partially a cripple, and as guileless as a child.

That night we roomed together, and he showed me that he carried upon his person a considerable amount of money and jewelry.

Despite my protest, he insisted upon me relieving him of a part of his valuables.

"You see," said he, laughingly, "in case we should be attacked by robbers they will not search a poor taxidermist, and so at least I can lose but a part of my fortune."

Later in the afternoon of the second day the watchmaker's horse lost a shoe.

We were considerably delayed in having it replaced, and at last, as reason night found us in a lonely road, some distance from the town of N——, which we had hoped to reach.

At midnight, however, my horse fell lame at nightfall.

Seeing a light a little off the road we found it proceeded from a misanthropic-looking house.

The door was open, and a light glimmered from within.

We had just seated ourselves to the not over-inviting fare spread for us, when the door opened and three men entered.

As near as I could judge they were father and sons, but the faces of all three were coarse and brutal in the extreme.

Each of them laid aside an axe as they entered, and from this I judged them to be wood-choppers.

Although not fancying their surly looks, I felt no particular uneasiness in my mind, and retired to rest with my usual serenity.

The room assigned us contained two small cots, standing one each side of an open window.

I glanced casually out, and saw it was some ten feet to the ground beneath.

Before retiring I urged the watchmaker to take back his property under his own care, as I did not like the responsibility, but he only laughed good-humoredly and refused.

In accordance with my usual precaution, I placed my pistols, a double and single barrel, under my pillow before retiring.

Were you ever awakened suddenly out of a sound sleep by a sense of some impending peril?

No? Well, I was that night.

How it occurred I knew not, but I suddenly awoke to behold a terrible sight.

Standing at the bedside of the watchmaker was the oldest of the three men.

In his hand he held a gleaming axe, with which he had just brained his victim.

It was the dull thud of that murderous blow that had awakened me. I felt instinctively that I was destined for a like fate.

As quickly as possible I thrust my hand beneath my pillow and grasped my pistols.

As I cocked one the click of the hammer startled the murderer. With a yell of rage he sprang towards me with the gory axe uplifted.

I took quick aim and fired.

He dropped his weapon, threw up his arms, and fell back across the body of his victim.

Following the report, I heard hurrying footsteps mounting the stairway, and knew that I had no time to lose.

Luckily I was partly dressed, and stopping only long enough to grasp my hat, I sprang upon the window-sill and dropped to the ground unhurt.

In the dim moonlight I could see our two horses tethered but a short distance away.

With every nerve thrilled with horror at the sight I had just witnessed, I was intent only upon escape.

My own horse was useless for an emergency, and springing upon the back of the watchmaker's beast, I stopped only long enough to put a bullet through the head of my own animal and galloped off.

I began to breathe easier, when suddenly, to my horror, I heard the sound of galloping hoofs behind me.

My enemies were not yet rid of; it was to be a race for life.

I glanced at the animal I rode.

He was a fair beast in his way, but of his staying qualities I knew nothing.

Picking up the watchmaker's whip, which hung to the

pommel of the saddle, I lashed the animal to a furious pace.

I glanced back over my shoulder; my pursuer was still slowly gaining.

For two miles I kept up this terrible speed, and then I saw my animal was beginning to fail.

My enemy was now close upon me.

I could see his evil-looking face, and recognized him as one of the sons of the murderer.

In his right hand he carried a knotted stick, with which he meant to brain me.

"Blame you!" he yelled, "you cannot escape me now."

I had emptied my double barrel gun, and now had only the charge in my single-barreled weapon, which I dared not risk wasting, for he was physically more than a match for me.

He was now within a few feet of me, shaking his fist in hatred.

Suddenly I turned in my saddle and discharged my pistol full at his breast.

With a wild yell of pain he tumbled from his horse.

I felt certain that I had killed him, and was now only anxious to reach the next town and report the whole affair to the authorities.

Spurring on my jaded steed, I reached the place in another hour.

As I drew up before the first inn my animal tottered.

I sprang quickly from the saddle, saw the brute stagger for an instant, and then drop dead.

In the bar-room I found a sleepy lad, whom I ordered to rouse his master at once.

This, however, he obstinately refused to do; and as it was then long past midnight, and I felt jaded and worn out with excitement, I concluded to wait until the following morning.

But it was bright daylight when I again awoke, and, springing from my bed, I started to seek the landlord, and invoke the aid of the authorities.

As I passed out the door I was suddenly seized by two men, and my wrists handcuffed.

"What means this?" I demanded.

"It means that we arrest you for the murder of two men," replied one of my captors.

Then from an adjoining room appeared the man who had pursued me the previous night.

His evil-looking face was pale, and I could see that his left shoulder was bandaged.

I had not killed him, after all.

The scoundrel had revenged himself by charging me not only with the death of his father, but with the murder of my friend.

I was hurried before a magistrate, to whom I told my story.

It was coldly received, and I was ordered to be closely confined.

I was without a single friend there, and two men ready to swear away my life.

Great heavens! the horror of the next three weeks!

Two sons swore that the axe was kept in that room.

One of them testified to hearing a cry of murder, followed by a dull thud.

They also swore that their father had rushed in to see what was the matter, only to be shot down by my hand.

But the strongest point of all was the finding of the belt containing the watchmaker's property and jewels concealed upon my person.

Suffice to say that I was sentenced to death.

But two weeks more remained to me.

Fortunately the magistrate, although believing me guilty, was willing to give me every chance for my life.

It suddenly came to me then that an old schoolmate of mine had gone to Paris, and had become a detective.

Of his address, though, I was in ignorance.

It was my only chance, however, and I hurriedly dispatched a note to him, in care of the police authorities in Paris.

A week passed by, and still I received no reply.

Terrible indeed were my feelings as the day of my execution arrived, and I felt my time had come to die.

Only five minutes remained now, and the priests were urging me to relieve my soul by confession.

But what means this sudden commotion?

A horse and rider is tearing frantically down the street toward us.

In another moment he has reined up in the midst of the gaping crowd.

"Hold!" he cried. "Thank heaven, I am yet in time to save an innocent man. Mr. Officer, here is a paper ordering you to defer the execution."

It was my old schoolmate the detective that spoke, and in another moment I was folded in his arms.

He had received my letter promptly and answered it, but the answer, as I afterwards learned, had miscarried.

Then he started at once for the spot where the murder had been committed, for I had related the story completely in my letter.

For a week he had prowled around the place in disguise, searching for a clew.

One night with his ear pressed to the window, he had heard the two sons congratulating each other over the success of the scheme that had not only secured the murdered man's booty, but also rid themselves of the fearful charge of murder.

The detective lost no time in securing assistance in his work.

Watching his opportunity, he managed to arrest both sons unknown to each other.

Professing to each that the other had confessed, he at last succeeded in frightening each into signing a true confession.

Laying these facts before the proper authorities, I was finally exonerated from the crime, and restored to my full liberty; but I have never forgotten what I often call "one of the last minutes of my life."

"How is it," inquired a young bride of an older married friend, "that you always manage to have such delicious beef?" "It's very simple," said the older woman. "I first select a good, honest butcher, and then I stand by him." "You mean that you give him all of your trade?" "No; I mean that I stand by him while he is cutting the meat."

GOOD READING

About twelve years ago the drug store of D. H. Huddleston, of Danville, Ind., was entered by burglars and the safe blown. All the money was taken from one compartment and the lock was broken on another. The safe, being considered worthless, had lain by the roadside until last week, when Mr. Huddleston decided to have it cut open. To his surprise he found it contained \$15 in gold and silver coins, several of which are of such dates as to command a premium.

A man sauntered into a restaurant and ordered a small steak in Battle Creek, Mich. When he arose from the table he noticed that a tooth lay on the plate. In great wrath he approached the attendant in the "chop house" and expressed himself on the subject of finding teeth in food. After he had discoursed for five minutes he caught a glimpse of his snarling mouth in a mirror and he found that one of his own pearly molars was missing. After a scant apology the toothless one hurried on his way.

During the first week of business the Panama Canal earned approximately \$55,000, not including the amount collected for barge service and payments made in advance for ships on their way to use the canal. These amounts not included, would bring the total receipts up to almost \$150,000. Thus far sixteen ships have used the canal: Fourteen American, one British and one Peruvian. Traffic, while regarded good, was not up to the expectations of canal officers, who say that the war is keeping many ships from using the waterway.

Plants with potatoes on their roots and tomatoes on their tops, raised in Britton, S. Dak., by H. E. Benson, may yet place him in the garden wizard class with the famous Burbank. In appearance the plants are of the ordinary potato variety, but at their tops are large bulbs resembling tomatoes in both look and seeds. Whether or not these are the ordinary potato balls often seen, or a growth caused by the mixing of the pollen of the tomato and potato blossoms is not certain, although the latter explanation of the odd combination plant is believed to be the true one.

S. A. Craig at the Tyler ranch, near Wakeeney, Kan., retired for the night in a granary. He was awakened with a queer sensation that something was wrong. When fully aroused the familiar buzz of the rattlesnake told him the trouble. Knowing the danger of moving he remained perfectly still, and the snake crawled along the floor and over his feet, turning and crawling over his breast. Craig hardly breathed until the reptile was entirely off his body, then he rang to his feet. He got a lantern, hunted the snake and killed it. It measured more than five feet in length and had fifteen rattles, besides the button. It was the largest rattler that has been killed in the country in a number of years.

The demand for soda ash from the Hutchinson plant of the Solvay Company, Hutchinson, Kan., may be increased as a result of the European war. The two largest plants in Europe manufacturing soda ash are near the seat of war and threatened with being closed. Both are owned by the Solvay Process Company, the corporation that operates the Hutchinson works. One of these, the plant regarded as the head works, is at Brussels, Belgium. The other is at Nancy, France. "The soda ash plant at Nancy is the largest in the world," said one of the local officials of the Solvay Process Company. "Practically all of the soda ash made in Europe is manufactured in Belgium and that vicinity. There are three plants in this country operated by the Solvay Company—at Syracuse, N. Y.; Detroit, Mich., and in Hutchinson."

Passengers on a westbound Chicago and Northwestern passenger train were saved from certain injury and probable death by Sumner Blake, an Arapahoe Indian, when he discovered a bridge had been washed out near Riverton, Wyo., and flagged the train within 100 feet of the dangerous spot. Blake was walking from Shoshone to Riverton, using the railroad track, when he found that a flood in Muskrat Creek had washed out the piling under a bridge. Knowing that the passenger train was about due, he hastily built a fire on the track. Barely had the blaze become bright when the train appeared. The Indian leaped about on the track in front of the fire, waving his sombrero. The engineer brought the train to a stop. Grateful passengers overwhelmed the Indian with expressions of gratitude and gifts, which so embarrassed him that he hurried away in the darkness.

Only by a marvelous batting spurt can Hans Wagner, the great Pittsburgh shortstop, attain .300 for this year, as he has always done heretofore during his career in the National League. For eighteen years Wagner batted above the .300 mark, but he is now hitting around .250, and cannot reach the mark that used to be so easy for him except by traveling at a .420 clip for the remainder of the season. There are but few games left on the Pittsburgh schedule, and, allowing Honus four times at bat in each game, he will have to make just 69 hits to bring his average to an even .300. With the pitchers at the top of their form, and Hans in the throes of the worst slump of his career, such a spurt seems neither probable nor possible. Instead of going up, Hans seems to be going back, in fact, and in the last ten days, in twenty-nine times at bat, he got but two hits, and his average dropped from .262 down to around .250. Although apparently losing the batting eye that for eighteen years made him the terror of the National League, Wagner is still scooping them up at the short field as easily and as brilliantly as in the old days. Even if he should never hit above .250 the Flying Dutchman is still a big asset to Fred Clarke's team.

ITCH POWDER.



Gees whis! What fun you can have with this stuff. Moisten the tip of your finger, tap it on the contents of the box, and a little bit will stick. Then shake hands with your friend, or drop a speck down his back. In a minute he will feel as if he had the seven years' itch. It will make him scratch, rear, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 10 cents a box, by mail, postpaid.

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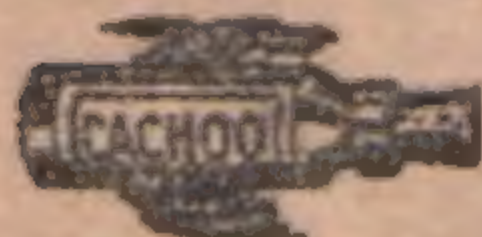
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FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

LAUGHABLE EGG TRICK



This is the funniest trick ever exhibited and always produces roars of laughter. The performer says to the audience that he requires some eggs for one of his experiments. As no spectator carries any, he calls his assistant, taps him on top of the head, he gasps, and an egg comes out of his mouth. This is repeated until six eggs are produced. It is an easy trick to perform, once you know how, and always makes a hit. Directions given for working it. Price, 35 cents by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

X-RAY WONDER



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C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

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H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

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C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

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The pencil that keeps them guessing. Made of wood and lead just like an ordinary pencil, but when your victim starts to write with it—presto! the lead disappears. It is so constructed that the slightest pressure on the paper makes the lead slide into the wood. Very funny and a practical joke.

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H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

PIGGY IN A COFFIN.



This is a wicked pig that died at an early age, and here he is in his coffin ready for burial. There will be a great many mourners at his funeral, for this coffin, pretty as it looks, is very tricky, and the man who gets it open will feel real grief. The coffin is made of metal, perfectly shaped and beautifully lacquered. The trick is to open it to see the pig. The man that tries it gets his fingers and feelings hurt, and piggy comes out to haunt at his victims. The tubular end of the coffin, which everyone (in trying to open) presses inward, contains a needle which stabs the victim in his thumb or finger every time. This is the latest and a very "impressive" trick. It can be opened easily by anyone in the secret, and as a neat catch-joke to save yourself from a bore is unsurpassed. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c., postpaid; one dozen by express, 75c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



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10c

The wonder of the 20th Century. Shows the bones in your fingers, lead in a pencil, etc., etc. You can see through clothes, even the flesh turns transparent and the bones can be seen. Very useful and instructive. The most interesting instrument ever invented. Think of the fun you can have with it. Complete X-Ray shipped, prepaid by mail upon receipt of 10c. X-RAY MFG. CO., Dept. 12, 28 E. 23d St., N. Y.

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DOUBLE THROAT CO., Dept. K, Franchtown, N. L.

MARBLE VASE.



A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase.

Price, 20c.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

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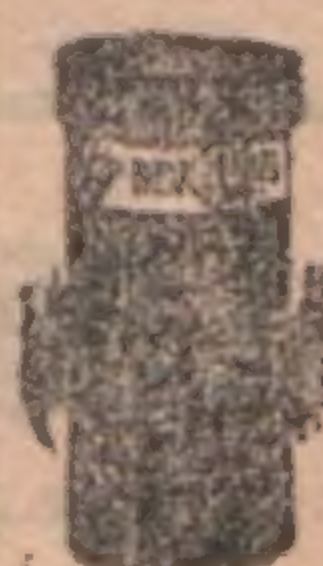


The greatest hit of the season! It consists of a small metal, nickle-plated tube, with a lens eye view, which shows a pretty ballet girl in tights. Hand it to a friend, who will be delighted with the first picture; tell him to turn the screw in center of instrument to change the views, when a stream of water squirts into his face, much to his disgust. Anyone who has not seen this kinematograph in operation is sure to be caught every time. The instrument can be refilled with water in an instant, ready for the next customer.

Price 25c. by mail, postpaid.

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BLACK-EYE JOKE.



New and amusing joker. The victim is told to hold the tube close to his eye so as to exclude all light from the back, and then to remove the tube until pictures appear in the center. In trying to locate the pictures he will receive the finest black-eye you ever saw. We furnish a small box of blackening preparation with each tube, so the joke can be used indefinitely. Those not in the trick will be caught every time. Absolutely harmless. Price by mail 15c. each; 2 for 25c.

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A wonderful illusion. To all appearances it is an ordinary dagger which you can flourish around in your hand and suddenly state that you think you have lived long enough and had better commit suicide, at the same time plunging the dagger up to the hilt into your breast or side, or you can pretend to stab a friend or acquaintance. Of course your friend or yourself are not injured in the least, but the deception is perfect and will startle all who see it.

Price, 10c., or 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

TRICK PUZZLE PURSE.



The first attempt usually made to open it, is to press down the little knob in the center of the purse, when a small needle runs out and stabs them in the finger, but does not open it. You can open it before their eyes and still they will be unable to open it.

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A handsome ring connected with a rubber ball which is concealed in the palm of the hand. A gentle squeeze forces water or cologne in the face of the victim while he is examining it. The ball can be instantly filled by immersing ring in water same as a fountain pen filler. Price by mail, postpaid, 12c. each.

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The puzzle is to separate the one star from the linked star and crescent without using force. Price by mail, postpaid 10c.; 2 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

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Something new for the boys. A top you can spin without a string. This is a decided novelty. It is of large size, made of brass, and has a heavy balance rim. The shank contains a powerful spring and has an outer casing. The top of the shank has a milled edge for winding it up. When wound, you merely lift the outer casing, and the top spins at such a rapid speed that the balance rim keeps it going a long time. Without doubt the handsomest and best top in the market.

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A new musical instrument, producing the sweetest dulcet tones of the flute. The upper part of the instrument is placed in the mouth, the lips covering the openings in the centre. Then by blowing gently upon it you can play any tune desired as easily as whistling. But little practice is required to become a finished player. It is made entirely of metal, and will last a lifetime. We will send full instructions with each instrument.

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This little novelty creates a world of laughter. Its chief attractiveness is that it takes a few seconds before leaping high in the air, so that when set, very innocently along side of an unsuspecting person, he is suddenly startled by the wonderful activity of this frog. Price, 15c. each by mail postpaid.

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A small musical instrument that produces very sweet musical notes by placing it between the lips with the tongue over the edge, and blowing gently into the instrument. The notes produced are not unlike those of the flute and flute. We send full printed instructions whereby anyone can play anything they can hum, whistle or sing, with very little practice. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed, postpaid.

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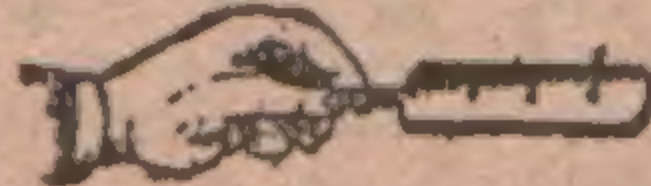
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ELECTRIC PUSH BUTTON.—The base is made of maple, and the center piece of black walnut, the whole thing about 1 1/4 inches in diameter, with a metal hook on the back so that it may be slipped over edge of the vest pocket. Expose to view your New Electric Ball, when your friend will push the button expecting to hear it ring. As soon as he touches it, you will see some of the liveliest dancing you ever witnessed. The Electric Button is heavily charged and will give a smart shock when the button is pushed. Price 10c., by mail, postpaid.

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A very effective pocket trick, easily to be performed by any one. A miniature paddle is shown. Central holes are drilled through it. A wooden peg is inside of the upper hole. Showing now both sides of the paddle, the performer causes, by simply breathing upon it, the peg to leave the upper hole, and appear in the middle one. Then it jumps to the lower hole, back to the middle one, and lastly to the upper hole. Both sides of the paddle are repeatedly shown. Price by mail, 15c.

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A handsome metal instrument, made in Germany, from which peculiar but sweet music can be produced. Its odd shape, which resembles a torpedo boat, will attract much attention. We send instructions with each instrument, by the aid of which anyone can in a short time play any tune and produce very sweet music on this odd-looking instrument. Price, 10c. by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

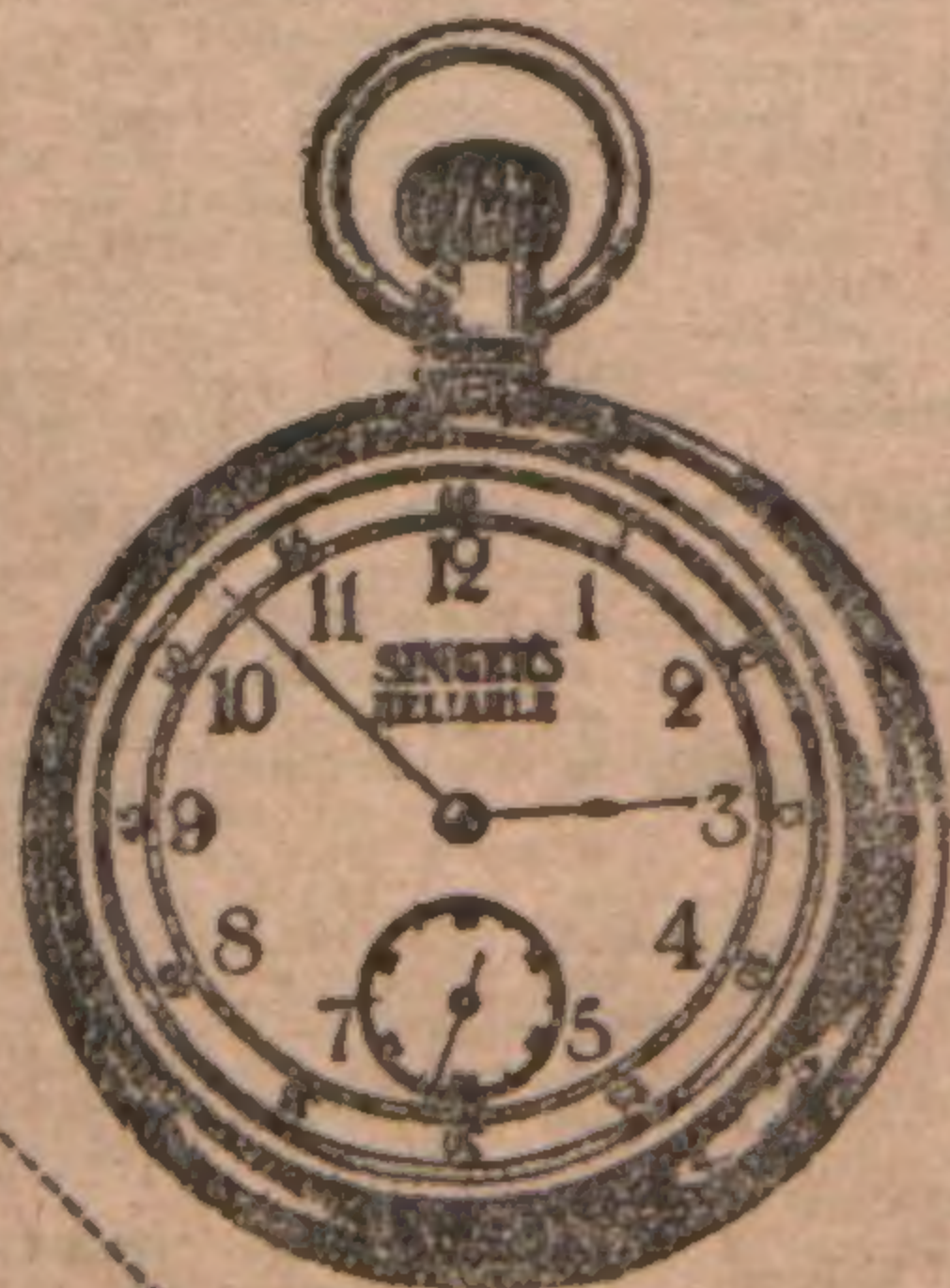
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